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Full Name of Author — Nom complet de l'auteur

Michael Kozlowski

Date of Birth — Date de naissance

MAY 1 1952

Country of Birth — Lieu de naissance

U.S.A.

Permanent Address — Résidence fixe

7913 - 112 ST
Edmonton Alberta, Canada
T6G 1K1

Title of Thesis — Titre de la thèse

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Name of Supervisor — Nom du directeur de thèse

Prof. R. Sydie

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EPISTEMIC EVALUATION IN THE SOCIOLOGY OF KNOWLEDGE: AN ANALYSIS

by

© Michael Kozlowski

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIRMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

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DEPARTMENT ..... SOCIOLOGY .....

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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, for acceptance, a thesis entitled EPISTEMIC EVALUATION IN THE SOCIOLOGY OF KNOWLEDGE: AN ANALYSIS submitted by Michael Kozlowski in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

R. Hinchie
Supervisor

John Young

Date 17/8/79

ABSTRACT

This thesis has two goals. The first is to understand epistemological relativism as a philosophical position and the second is to understand how relativism is related to the sociology of knowledge. The most general conclusion which informs the content of the thesis is that, as philosophical doctrines, relativism and absolutism are mutually exclusive and exhaustive. Relativism claims that knowledge is best understood when the human reality of interests, traditions and cognitive capacities which are constitutive of knowledge are understood. Absolutism denies this. The conflict between relativism and absolutism is involved in all three parts of the thesis. In Part One, Mannheim's attempt to reconcile the relativism implicit in historicism and Hegelian absolutism is discussed and rejected. In Part Two, three research programmes which rely on absolutism are discussed. The first of these looks to philosophical epistemology to set standards for the attainment of absolute knowledge and therefore to establish a basis for sociological evaluation of knowledge. The second is supported by a scientistic confidence in sociological knowledge. The third is hopeful of finding absolute knowledge by means of a synthetic compilation of merely relative bodjes of knowledge. All three of these programmes are subjected to an immanent critique and are consequently rejected. In Part Three, the philosophical doctrine of relativism is explicated and defended from a set of criticisms which have often been raised against it. Finally, the relation between the form of relativism defended and empirical research in the sociology of knowledge is explored. It is concluded that many of the empirical and moral concerns which are often thought to entail an absolutist basis for the discipline can be accomodated in a relativist sociology of knowledge.

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I should like to express my gratitude to the members of my committee. I am especially appreciative of the support and patience of Professors Rosalynd Sydie and Nico Stehr for a work which unfolded slowly. Finally, I am most grateful for the continuing financial support of the University of Alberta. This generosity allowed a young intellectual from a powerful but troubled nation to become socially unattached. I argue in the following pages that this must be the origin of the sociology of knowledge. Whether it is its terminus is another story.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The sociology of knowledge may, in a promissory sense, be the most profound articulation of science yet proposed. For with this discipline science comes full circle and proposes to study its own production. This at least is the promise of the sociology of knowledge. Its realization has yet to be fulfilled. Paradoxically, it is even questionable whether its projected realization can be coherently articulated.

It is probably best to begin any study in the sociology of knowledge with an admission of this paradox which the discipline irreducibly entails.[1] Even if it is not explicitly stated, it always lurks in some form in the near background. Such an admission is even more necessary in this work because its goal, like that of an immense number of others, is to provide some clarity as to the nature and implications of the problems which threaten the very proposal to study knowledge sociologically.

There are three general responses to this paradox that have been made. The first arises from the observation that science, by coming full circle in the form of the sociology of knowledge, becomes circular in a logically fallacious manner. It is therefore an impossible proposal. The solution offered by this response is to carry on the sociology of knowledge but only in a highly circumscribed manner and under the tutelage of the properly foundational discipline of epistemology which has the historical and logical perogative to provide an account of the foundations and possibility of all knowledge.

The second response is an enthusiastic one. Bold claims are made that the sociology of knowledge is able to be epistemically evaluative in one or possibly several ways. Proponents of this response claim that they can, on sociological grounds, identify a given body of knowledge as true in opposition to the illusions of other competing claims. Similarly, they have attempted to characterize the social conditions of knowledge communities in terms of those which are most likely to produce true knowledge. A few proponents, most notably Mannheim, have attempted to synthesize from various competing knowledge claims a composite and true body of knowledge which avoids the limitations of its component perspectives.

The third response is the one which is most responsive to the rich complexity of the paradox itself. Consequently, it is the most subdued and circumspect in its characterization of the sociology of knowledge. The suggestion is offered that the unique and rigourous foundations promised by the first response are not, in principle, possible. Also the question is raised as to whether the kind of activities proposed by the second response are an accurate account of what goes on when these proposals are actually implemented. In short, those who endorse the third response realize that for both conceptual and empirical reasons, the sociological study of the production of the sciences and other bodies of knowledge leads inexorably to a position of cognitive relativism. This response is therefore concerned to given an account (not a solution) of relativism and then to suggest the sort of sociology of knowledge which can procede on the basis of relativism.

The purpose of this thesis is to criticize the first two responses and promote the third. The defense of the third response sets two

general tasks. The first is to establish that there are acceptable philosophical grounds which can underwrite a relativist sociology of knowledge. The second is to establish that relativism need not proscribe a strong version of the discipline. Perhaps sociologists have been reluctant to embrace the third response primarily because it may appear to offer only an eviscerated version of the concepts which have been particularly useful in empirical study and less because of suspicions that its philosophical foundations are unacceptable or incoherent. The viability of the third response can therefore be largely judged on the extent to which its relativist foundations remain consistent with the retention of a conceptual armament which can fulfil some of the classical intentions of the sociology of knowledge.

The critique of the first two responses proceeds in an inverse fashion. The task in this phase of the work is to argue either that the conceptual underpinnings of the research programmes which arise from these responses are untenable or that these programmes themselves are substantively deficient.

A second but not secondary aim of the thesis is an examination of the views of Karl Mannheim. The amount of attention given to Mannheim is astounding and even more so when it is pointed out that nearly all of this extensive exegesis is intended as refutation. If the man's ideas were in fact so misguided it would seem that a definitive critique could have been written long ago. Instead, each generation of sociologists returns again and again to the master only to come away disapointed. Kettler (1967:426) attributes this interest to Mannheim's application of the sociology of knowledge to a set of moral and political concerns which his commentators presumably share. But there can be another and

perhaps more plausible explanation for the proliferation of analyses of Mannheim's writings in the sociology of knowledge based on more narrowly construed theoretical grounds. Quite clearly, Mannheim's work contains in an often blatent manner, a wealth of contradictions and philosophical tensions. It should be added that this need not be a reflection on his intellectual capacities. Rather, there is an experimental quality to Mannheim's writings in which problems, solutions, and goals are posited and analytically exploited in an often searching way and then either abandoned without much notice or altered in such a way as to give rise to unavoidable contradictions and inconsistencies.[2] It is this intrinsic ambiquity and opacity which results from the very nature of Mannheim's method and intentions which is able to support such continuing debate and analysis. Mannheim, in short, is interesting in a manner shared with other classical sociological thinkers.[3]

Unfortunately, few of Mannheim's critics have exploited this implicitly pedagogical nature of his work. Rather, their general strategy is to point to certain of these contradictions and then conclude on this basis that his conception of the sociology of knowledge is untenable. The strategy followed here is quite the opposite. Certain of these contradictions and inconsistencies are to be exposed in order that his entirely sound and insightful contributions can be rescued from often facile refutation. Thus, there is to be much criticism brought against Mannheim in the following discussion. His work is perhaps the most sophisticated effort to render the second approach discussed above viable and much of the thesis is intended to refute the possibility of such a conception. Still his work contains numerous insights and suggestions for a relativistic sociology of knowledge. In the final chapter therefore,

attention will be given to these contributions in order to achieve a more just appraisal of Mannheim's work than has usually been the case.

Another unfortunate characteristic of the English literature on Mannheim is that there is very little attention given to any text except Ideology and Utopia. There appears to be no systematic treatment, beyond an occasional mention, of the essays written in the half decade before this central text even though they have been available in English for over twenty-five years. Analysis of these pieces is certainly not of merely academic interest for they are essential for fully understanding Ideology and Utopia. Indeed, criticisms of that work from both hostile (e.g. Sahay, 1972) and sympathetic (e.g. Phillips, 1974) sources are often invalid in the light of positions worked out in the earlier essays (especially with regard to epistemological issues) but which are not developed again in Ideology and Utopia. With specific reference to a primary concern of this work, the evaluative sociology of knowledge, Mannheim's defense of this position could easily be mistaken to be entirely inadequate if it were not for the lengthy discussions of this issue in three important essays written between 1921 and 1925.[4]

For this reason, Part One is devoted entirely to an analysis and evaluation of Mannheim's early efforts to come to terms with relativism and cognitive evaluation which are implicitly relied upon in the chapter in Ideology and Utopia entitled "Prospects For A Scientific Politics" where the idea of an "evaluative conception of ideology" is defended. However, in order to question and critically evaluate this idea it is necessary to go beyond an explication of Mannheim's writings. This because it does not seem possible to demonstrate the crucial flaw in his position without presenting in some detail his dual and contradictory

reliance on two traditions of German thought - Hegelianism and historicism. Accordingly, two chapters of Part One are concerned with certain aspects of these two traditions. In the case of Hegel, it has been necessary to be rather lengthy since Mannheim's writings fail to demonstrate that he was sufficiently aware of all of the implications which ensued from his adoption of some central claims of Hegelian philosophy. Much of Part One may seem tangential to the controversy surrounding the sociology of knowledge but the claims advanced here are entirely necessary for adjudicating Mannheim's role in this controversy.

Parts Two and Three then take up the complex of specific issues which have and continue to be discussed with vigour. As implied in the paragraphs above, all of these issues relate in some way to the problem of cognitive relativism and this issue therefore serves as the central theme both for the critique of the evaluative sociology of knowledge and for the discussion of the conditions and prospects for a relativistic sociology of knowledge.

Notes to Chapter I

1. This practice has, for example, been followed in a number of studies which are entirely empirical. See: Crane (1972:9f) and Warren (1971:469).

2. Mannheim himself recognized this quality as an intrinsic property of his work. This is most explicitly acknowledged in a letter written by Mannheim and published in part in an essay by Kurt Wolff (1959: 571,572).

3. Davis (1971:309) has explored the sense in which the longevity of the theories of classical sociological thinkers is better accounted for in terms of the degree to which they are "interesting" rather than true or false. "Those who carefully and exhaustively verify trivial theories are soon forgotten; whereas those who cursorily and expdiently verify interesting theories are long remembered."

4. These essays are: "On the interpretation of 'Weltanschauung'" (1952a); "Historicism" (1952b); and "The problem of the sociology of knowledge" (1952c).

PART ONE

THE INTELLECTUAL BACKGROUND OF MANNHEIM'S SOCIOLOGY OF KNOWLEDGE

CHAPTER II

HEGEL'S ABSOLUTE SYNTHESIS

Hegel and the Sociology of Knowledge

It is commonly understood that the revived interest among sociologists during the last decade in the sociology of knowledge and science has been prompted by philosophers such as Kuhn and Feyerabend who have sought to understand the growth of scientific knowledge as a social process. That this impetus has been provided by philosophers and not primarily by sociologists is considered by some authors to be ironic or inappropriate.[1] However this sort of response fails to apprehend the significant fact that every current of the sociology of knowledge has been dependent on and circumscribed by particular traditions of philosophical thought far more than is the case for other sociological specialties. Mannheim, for example, despite his incessant battle against positivist thinking in the social sciences, was still beholden to the positivist view of the history and growth of physical scientific knowledge. Therefore it can be argued that the form of this revived interest among sociologists would be quite inconceivable had it not been for the philosophical critique of empiricist and positivist philosophies of science which has figured so prominently on the intellectual scene of the past two decades.

It is therefore often illuminating and even necessary to understand the philosophical currents which are related to the efforts of

specific thinkers in the sociology of knowledge. For this reason, Part One deals with aspects of Mannheim's sociology of knowledge which are best understood in relation to Hegel's philosophy and to some historicist thinkers. Mannheim's commentators generally mention one or both of these traditions in his intellectual background (e.g. Remmling, 1975:28; Bottomore, 1956:55). What is far less common, especially with reference to Hegel, are analyses of the consequences of this influence for the claims that Mannheim made for the sociology of knowledge.[2] As noted in Chapter I, these claims center around the effort to make the sociology of knowledge epistemically evaluative. For Mannheim, this effort took the form of a search for a "position from which a total perspective would be possible" (1936:160). In his early writings, this search takes an unmistakably Hegelian tone in which are included both acknowledged and unacknowledged elements from this thinker. The following remarks are intended to establish however, that, given Mannheim's adoption of the results of historicist thinking, this search, in its early or Hegelian phase at least, could not succeed.

Hegel's philosophy can either be viewed as a rich source of insights and justification for sociological approaches to the study of knowledge or, as in the case of Mannheim, a source of impediments to a consistent understanding of the foundational commitments of the sociology of knowledge. The purpose of this chapter is to point to the aspects of Hegel's system which, although they are coherent with Hegel's own general presuppositions, clash with and ultimately vitiate Mannheim's efforts to clarify the philosophical commitments and sociological results of the sociology of knowledge.

Unfortunately, within the English literature in the sociology of

knowledge and on Mannheim in particular, there seems to be no systematic effort to come to terms with either Hegel's potentially positive influence or his pernicious influence on Mannheim. With regard to the first task, there is really no work which is sufficiently aware of how suggestive and innovative Hegel's thought is with regard to the intimate link between knowledge and social reality.[3] Typically it is assumed (e.g. Hamilton, 1974:74) that Hegel viewed consciousness as external to history and then endeavoured to deduce from a set of arcane presuppositions all of history and historical knowledge by means of a monotonous series of triads. This misconceived version continues with the idea that Marx saw the foolishness of such a philosophy, reversed the pattern of the generation of consciousness and thus inaugurated the sociology of knowledge. What would need to be done in order to overthrow this prevalent misinterpretation is to show that there is in Hegel, and as a central part of his philosophy, an easily discernable "proto-paradigm" somewhat along the lines of what Stark (1973) has called the "conservative tradition of the sociology of knowledge."[4]

Tracing the influence which Hegel exerted on generations of succeeding thinkers would be sufficient to show that Hegel's work opened up in a way that the work of his immediate predecessors such as Kant and Fichte could not have, a vast range of issues and problems concerning the relationship of knowledge and society. By insisting on the essential connection of the absolute and the finite aspects of human intellect, cultural and society, Hegel could thus be shown to have influenced generations of those succeeding social theorists who inaugurated the sociology of knowledge in a way analogous to the influence of Kuhn and Feyerabend on the current generation of sociologists.[5]

In contrast to this positive task, the purpose of this chapter is to point to the aspects of Hegelian philosophy on which Mannheim relied to ameliorate the relativist tensions which he located in the sociology of knowledge. It will be shown however, that these aspects are crucially inconsistent with theintention and basic assumptions of the sociology of knowledge as it finds expression in other aspects of Mannheim's thought on the foundations of the discipline.

Aspects of Hegel

As implied by the title of this section, the intention here is not to deal either exhautively or systematically with Hegel's philosophy. The intention is to find in that philosophy the striking anticipation of the method and projected results of Mannheim's sociology of knowledge. To establish this kind of relation is not to impose Hegelian thought onto Mannheim's thinking for, as will be seen, Mannheim himself sanctioned this comparison. He reasoned however, that adopting an Hegelian programme did not threaten his claim to be engaged in a sociology of knowledge. For he claimed that he could succeed in carrying through this programme while Hegel had failed. This last claim reveals Mannheim's faulty understanding of Hegelian philosophy. It was, further, an error which masked the intrinisic flaw of incorporating the Hegelian programme within Mannheim's strong historicist framework.

To support this last claim it will be necessary to discuss some elements of Hegelian philosophy to which Mannheim, in his written work at least, was insufficiently sensitive. Given this dual strategy of showing both parallels and essential disparities between Hegel and Mannheim, the following points of discussion may appear quite unconnected.

However, their inclusion can be justified at this point by noting that their significance will be demonstrated when Mannheim's solution to the relativism contained in historicist thought is explicitly discussed in Chapter IV.

Hegel was born in 1770 and the world in which he matured as well as the ten year period in which his philosophical system took shape (roughly 1797-1807) was a highly fertile and turbulant period - politically, artistically, socially and politically. Mentioning the French revolution and Kant's Critique of Pure Reason which dethroned, respectively, the monarchy and speculative reason are sufficient to underscore the epochal events with which the youthful Hegel sought to come to terms. Against this background, his life work can be viewed as an attempt to integrate into a rational whole the entirety of the empirical world including the history and contemporary state of philosophy, religion and art.

Hegel pursued this goal within the idealistic tradition of systematic, or what he called scientific, philosophy which retained a basic idealisitc dualism between thought or reason and the phenomenal world of appearance. But the immense profundity and originality of Hegel is to be found in the way in which he insisted upon seeing this duality as an abstract and hence untrue conception. Hegel was therefore cautious not to impose reason on a recalcitrant empirical reality. Rather he sought to find absolute reason and its slow realization in the apparently random flux of brute, empirical reality. Consequently, as Lowith (1967:29) has observed, Hegel's "entire system is historically oriented to an extent which is true of no previous philosophy." Of course there were among the work of Hegel's predecessors philosophies of art, religion, politics and history but Hegel's own conception of philosophy was that these

fragmented views be subsumed as aspects of a transcendent Idea which presents its progressive realization in the immanent historical process.

Philosophy is not, however, intended to be a mere reproduction or report of empirical and historical reality. This task is assigned by Hegel to the special empirical sciences of nature, history and man. Philosophy, as the master science, is concerned to document the reality of the transcendent and, initially, wholly self-contained Absolute Idea. This Idea, complete "in-itself" as Hegel says, engages in an act of self-alienation by which it becomes other than itself. This self-alienation and return to itself in the form of the true philosophical science constitutes the Idea's self realization within the historical realm of finite empirical and cultural forms. Empirical reality is therefore important for philosophical reflection only insofar as it reveals this movement of the Absolute Idea toward its realization.

In order to support his distinction between empirical sciences and philosophy, Hegel relies on an important and typically idealistic dualism between mere accidental aspects of existence and the reality which is the expression of the Idea. The accidental aspects of reality are those which are not essential in the Idea's self realization since in them are not to be found moments of the development of the Idea. They therefore, as Hegel says regarding mere historical facts, "concern particular existence and the accidental and arbitrary side, the features that are not necessary." (1966:63). But, insofar as finite forms are essential or not merely the realm of the particular and accidental, the task of the philosopher is to find "Reason glinting through them."[6]

With this view of reality and the place of philosophy within it, Hegel posits a distinction between the truth of absolute knowledge achieved

only with philosophy and the partial realizations of truth in the moments which are constituted by particular historical, cultural and philosophical forms. This theory of truth is announced early in the Pheonomenology when Hegel writes that "the true form in which truth exists can only be the scientific system of it: (1966:12). Again in the introductory sections of the Encyclopedia Hegel says with reference to philosophical truth that

> Truth is only possible as a universe or totality of thought... Each of the parts of philosophy is a philosophical whole, a circle rounded and complete in itself...The whole of philosophy in this way resembles a circle of circles. The Idea appears in each circle, but, at the same time, the whole Idea is constituted by the system of these particular phases and each is a necessary member of the organization.[7]

The precise nature and generation of Hegel's conception of philosophy is not presently at issue here. What is significant is to observe that its assertion sets two problems which the detail and content of that philosophy is designed to meet. The first is the reconstruction or redescription of cultural and philosophical thought systems which all proclaim their own completeness as but moments in the Absolute realization of the Idea. The second is that Hegel must justify his own philosophical thought as the true consummation of the Idea's self-realization and not merely as another finite system of thought.

With regard to the first problem, Hegel has claimed that his work "includes the various forms of the spirit as stations on the way on which it [spirit] becomes pure knowledge or absolute spirit" (1966:4). If Hegel is to justify his claim that these various forms are "stations" of the spirit rather than complete and self-sufficient positions, he must have a device which justifies this kind of redescription. Toward this end, Hegel develops his famous notion of the "cunning of Reason."

This concept refers to the manner in which the self realization of the Idea is masked to finite individuals by their own worldly and passionate pursuits. Although the idea of the cunning of Reason is primarily utilized by Hegel in his political thought, it is anticipated in the Phenomenology when the progression of philosophical systems and self-proclaimed truths are discussed. Such partial or "determinate" forms of knowledge or manifestations of the spirit "suppose that they are pursuing their self-preservation and particular interests though in fact they are the converse, an activity that dissolves itself and makes itself a moment of the whole." This, Hegel says, "is the cunning that seems to abstain from activity while it looks on as determinateness" (1966:82).

The idea is therefore said to find its expression through finite and particular historical and cultural forms in a way not clearly discernable to the finite individuals or groups of individuals who have asserted these limited expressions. This allows Hegel, for example, to view the profusion of philosophical truths through history in an integrated and hierarchical perspective. He writes:

> It is important to have a deeper insight into the bearings of this diversity of truths in the systems of philosophy. Truth and and philosophy, known philosophically, make such diversity appear in another light than that of abstract opposition between truth and error. We must make the fact conceivable that the diversity and number of philosophies not only does not prejudice philosophy itself, that is to say, the possibility of a philosophy, but that such diversity is and has been absolutely necessary to the existence of a science of philosophy and that it is essential to it (1955:18,19).

Philosophy therefore achieves the status of a systematic science when it has successfully understood the part played by each partial expression of truth in the final or absolute truth. By claiming this

absolute standpoint, Hegel claims to have shown all finite expressions of the Idea to be explicated and justified as necessary but limited expressions of what can now be understood as Absolute knowledge. By doing so he is able to move away from the simple dichotomy of truth and falsehood to a view which claims that every mode of consciousness, system of philosophy, set of political arrangements is neither true nor false but partial in its expression of the truth conceived as a whole encircling this panoply of limited circles.

This is only the asserted goal of Hegelian philosophy. What remains problematic for any thinker who disposes of a simple dichotomy of truth and falsehood is the problem of a criterion for assigning truth value to those standpoints and arguments which are said to constitute a partial truth. Hegel encounters this problem in a particularly acute form since his system of philosophy is intended to be an account of such a vast range of partial standpoints which eventually arrives at his standpoint which itself reveals the complete truth of Absolute knowledge.

The aspect of the system which accounts for and justifies the possibility of philosophical science and at the same time mirrors the essential structure of the Idea can be termed its two dimensional hierarchical structure. One dimension, the horizontal, or the aspect of historicity has already been discussed. Much of the systematic content of the system claims to demonstrate the hierarchical progression of limited standpoints through history toward their highest and thus true expression. Hegel's famed dialectic, construed as a method at least, is connected with this view of spiritual and intellectual progress. By subjecting limited viewpoints to serious study and criticism

what ultimately results is their negation and transition into a viewpoint which preserves the partial truth of that viewpoint in a higher more complete truth.

Intimately linked with and presupposed by the horizontal or historistic hierarchy is a vertical hierarchy which establishes, in a sense, a cognitive division of labour. As discussed above, Hegel was intent upon including in the philosophic system a role for every field of cognitive and empirical scientific activity. By the 19th century the time had long passed when philosophy could ignore with impunity the growth of empirical science. The work which speaks toward this concern is the Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences first published in 1817. This work contains the familiar tripartite divisions of the Hegelian system which imply a temporal order as well: Part I the Logic, applicable to understanding the Idea abstractly before its self alienation; Part II, the philosophy of nature, or the Idea before its attainment of self-consciousness; and finally, Part III, the philosophy of mind. The final sections of this third part deal with absolute mind and its expression in art, religion and philosophy. The special empirical sciences are thus relegated to the 'lower' divisions which, because they are realms in which the Idea receives only limited expression, are rather better suited to the non-dialectical methods which have developed within these sciences.

Further specification of the detailed results of the system are unimportant for the present purpose. What is important is to document the crucial epistemological status of Absolute knowledge or knowledge of the Idea within the system's two dimensional hierarchy. It has already

been shown that that status is one of completion. Hegel's philosophical system resolves the Idea's self-alienation in the form of its recollection and return to itself in that system. Hegel, in short, achieves Absolute knowledge of the complete history and nature of the Idea. However, not only does Absolute knowledge constitute a completion, it constitutes a beginning. For the system of Absolute knowledge to commence, the Absolute standpoint must already be achieved. Absolute knowledge is therefore presupposed as a prerequisite and criterion which allows for the construction of the system.[8]

For Hegelian philosophy to even get under way, the Absolute standpoint must therefore already be secured. That is, the intent and method of that philosophy can only be achieved and function if there is some premonition of the form which the result will take. Of course, the presupposition is not a surreptitious one. Hegel explicitly maintains for example, that in the study of the history of philosophy, "in order to obtain a knowledge of its progress as the development of the Idea in the empirical external form in which philosophy appears in history, a corresponding knowledge of the Idea is absolutely necessary" (1955:30,31). It can therefore be said that each partial standpoint precisely because it must be viewed as partially true, presupposes absolute knowledge, while the absolute standpoint insofar as it can be viewed as being actualized through the history of nature and man, presupposes every finite standpoint which appears on its path to full actualization.

Within the historical dimension of the hierarchy, the absolute standpoint is both a presupposition and a goal of the myriad partial manifestations of the Idea. It is, in short, the criterion by which

the partial manifestations are to be judged. Within the vertical structure of cognitive forms, Absolute knowledge in the form of the philosophical system is the realm in which the Ideas receives its complete expression and hence is fully realized. As such it is the pinnacle of intellectual and spiritual achievement. However, in documenting the lesser forms of this accomplishment, Hegel must presuppose the standpoint of Absolute knowledge which allows him to circumscribe the partial truth of finite philosphical and cultural forms.

This presupposition permeates the entire structure of the Phenomenology. Consider the examination, in the early stages of this work, of "sense certainty" which claims to arrive at certain, unmediated knowledge of physical objects independent of subjective consciousness. To depict the inadequacy of this poistion, Hegel relies on the sort of universal categories revealed in the absolute standpoint. He maintains that sense certainty refutes itself in its implicit reliance on and hence mediation by these universal subjective categories which present themselves in sense certainty's use of the prounoun "this" to refer to "this tree". In this way, the claim of sense certainty to have immediate and discrete knowledge of objective particulars is refuted. But this refutation is only achieved by presupposing at least some of the metaphysical content revealed by the Absolute standpoint. Most notable in this case is the assumption that critical reflection must demonstrate the untruth of the distinction between thought and being.[9]

One of the commentators who has recognized and criticized Hegel's presupposition of the absolute standpoint is Habermas. He writes (1971:10) that Hegel's intentions to find error in Kantian philosophy and to establish the theory of knowledge as critical recollection are endangered

"because from the very beginning Hegel presumes as given a knowledge of the Absolute". Habermas (1971:10) maintains however that "the possibility of just this knowledge would have to be demonstrated according to the criteria of Hegel's radicalized critique of knowledge." As shown above, Habermas is correct when he points to Hegel's presupposition. This presupposition of the absolute standpoint is intrinsic to Hegel's endeavor to find the Absolute working its way towards self-realization in an otherwise mundane historical reality. Hegel as the first philosopher of Absolute knowledge, must therefore claim a special access to or, in other words, must presuppose the Absolute standpoint.

However, Habermas is incorrect in implying that Hegel merely presupposes the Absolute standpoint; he is certainly incorrect if he interprets Hegel as asserting that this standpoint is "given" where this term has the technical meaning of being transparently and incorrigibly known. Hegel, on the contrary, was quite concerned to find evidence for his philosophical science and its intrinsic presupposition both by justifying his philosophical claims and by finding warrent for those claims by means of showing their anticipation in non-philosophical thought. With this concern, the second problematic of Hegelian philosophy comes into view. Hegel claims access to the Absolute standpoint in order to demonstrate that standpoint as the realization of the Idea. Now he must justify this initial claim. Again, the present purpose does not allow an exhaustive consideration of Hegel's efforts in this regard which form the entirety of the system's content. However, it is important to show first, that Hegel was sensitive to this requirement and second, some of the ways in which he attempted to meet it. This is

important because Mannheim seems quite unaware of this aspect of the philosophy which he claimed to implement in an improved version which would include this kind of evidential justification.

Hegel claimed that what made his philosophy superior to that of his immediate predecessors was that he intended to justify it by careful attention to the movement of the transcendent content in the actual content of finite reality. That he was engaged in this kind of 'inductive' procedure is clearly evident from the Preface to the Phenomenology. Contained in this work is a scathing criticism of philosophies which are merely asserted rather than being painstakingly justified. The philosopher particularly singled out for Hegel's at times sarcastic abuse is Schelling and the following discussion of Hegel's critique of his most immediate predecessor is of dual significance for the current interest. First, it will serve to portray Hegel as concerned to find some warrent beyond his own subjective assertion for his philosophical science. Second, the critique and the subsequent positive programme can be shown to be interestingly analogous to Mannheim's critique of some of his contemporaries.

Friedrich Schelling, although five years younger than Hegel, rose to philosophical prominence nearly ten years before the publication of Hegel's first major work, the Phenomenology. The two had been close friends and associates since their youthful seminary days and Hegel was generally considered to be Schelling's disciple until this work appeared. It is plainly evident that the general form and goal of Hegel's absolute idealism is closely indebted to Schelling's own version of absolute idealism developed in works between 1800 and 1803 (Schacht, 1975:33-37). That this debt was to remain at this general

level became clear with the publication of the Phenomenology and its bitterly sarcastic rebuke of Schelling's work. What Hegel specifically objects to in Schelling is his dialectical formalism and, more generally, the relationship the latter finds between finite and absolute reality.

The dialectic as an ontological rather than epistemological or pedagogical idea is perhaps first found in Fichte. Schelling recast Fichte's notion of dialectical development in terms of the now familiar thesis-antithesis-synthesis schema or what he called "the law of triplicity" (Schacht, 1975:33). There are numerous passages in the preface to the Phenomenology in which Hegel takes issue with this "law". What he objects to is the manner in which Schelling elevates a notion arrived at, as it were, by mere "instinct" in order to characterize the finite manifestations of the empirical world and hence to arrive, through this purely formal dynamic process, at the absolute standpoint. Hegel is clearly unsatisfied with this "schmetizing formalism" which is "learned as quickly as it is easy to master it" (1966:74,78). He further says that

> The instrument of the monotonous formalism is no more difficult to handle than a painter's palette on which there are only two colors, say, red and green, one if an historical piece is wanted, the others for landscapes (1966:78).

What is ultimately at fault in this bogus profundity is a cavalier attitude toward the actual and essential content of the empirical world. No attempt is made to find in that actual content the real movement and expression of the absolute Idea. In short, "the living essence of the matter is left out" and is expressed rather "according to a superficial analogy" (1966:76,78). Hegel's own conception of philosophical science involves a serious concern to render an account of the rich

content of the empirical world and yet at the same time to ascribe to that content the movement of the transcendent absolute Idea. Thus, in opposition to Schelling's method, Hegel can observe that the "content does not receive its determinateness from another, like a label; instead it determines itself and assigns itself its place as a moment of the whole...scientific knowledge...demand precisely that we surrender to the life of the object or...that we confront and express its inner necessity" (1966:80).

In contrast to Schelling's romantic intuitionism which imposed speculative conceptions on and thus attempted to supercede the "distinct and determinate" (Hegel, 1966:26) content of the actual world, Hegel's philosophy is an attempt to, in a sense, discover or account for its speculative content as essential but incomplete moments of the Absolute occuring in finite reality. It is with reference to this end that Hegel's own dialectical method is fashioned not as an austere compilation of triads but as a method which immerses itself in each position and finds the limitations which point toward an advanced position which is considered in turn. This requirement is what Hegel has in mind when he says that "to consider a thing rationally means not to bring reason to bear on the object from the outside and so to tamper with it, but to find that the object is rational on its own account."[10] Through this method Hegel hopes to justify an absolute idealism, not in opposition to finite manifestations, but as arising from these in such a way that it can "preserve the process of rising in the result of having risen" (Fackenhiem, 1967:29).

At the origin of the dispute between Hegel and Schelling, there is perhaps a psychological divergence in the way in which they relate

to their philosophical labours. It may be that Hegel took the claims of Absolute idealism rather more seriously than Schelling. If history and the finite world are to be ultimately related to the work of an absolute and transcendent world spirit, then the philosophical thought of mere humans becomes inherently paradoxical - it is at once a mere moment in the finite process but one in which that process is destined to reach the completed Absolute. Therefore, thought as a subjective manifestation is inherently finite and particular but as an objective spiritual result it is destined to reach and become identical with the Absolute. Indeed, Hegel's divergence from romantic thought, many of whose formulations he shares, can perhaps be ascribed to an insistence that this paradox and the cognitive problems which ensue from it be accorded the utmost efforts at resolution which goes beyond the mystical intuitions and inattention to finite reality which characterize Schelling's thought. In order to resolve this paradox, philosopical thought requires as a propadeutic an evolutionary foundation in the realm of non-philosophical finite reality.

This foundation which serves as a justification of philosophy is to be found in Christian theology. The place of Christian belief in Hegel's philosophy is so ambiguous that Hegel has been chastised both for his implicit atheism and for constructing nothing but an obscure Protestant theology veiled with philosophical categories. This ambiguity can be accounted for by understanding Hegel's profound reliance on, yet attempt to surpass, religious formulations.

Religion has the dual function as a sort of metaphoric justification of the absolute standpoint and as an evolutionary basis for

philosophical apprehension of this standpoint. According to Hegel, the core doctrines of Christian faith provide speculative philosophy with an apprehension of the truth of the absolute Idea. The conception of an eternal, transcendent God outside of time yet in an act of diremption becoming fully immanent in finite reality in the form of an historical person provides a striking analogy to Hegel's secularized version of this story. It is on the strength of this conception that Hegel places religion as the immediate predecessor to philosophical thought in his realm of Absolute mind. It becomes the business of philosophy to take up the truth of Christianity - expressed on the level of vague, mythological notions and feelings - and complete it in the wholly true form of philosophical thought (Kaufman, 1965:275). Thus Christianity, especially in its less mystical, more rational articulation in Protestant thought, is relegated to the role of anticipating the truth of the Absolute philosophy.

Religion is not, for Hegel, a mere anticipation. It is a necessary moment which gives the philosophical thought which completes it a warrant which a wholly secular philosophy cannot have. The point is a subtle one, and one to which Fackenhiem (1967) has devoted an entire book. It is his contention that the claims which Hegel makes for his philosophy stand on whether the expression and presentiment of the Absolute spirit can be found in non-philosophic thought. If this is not the case, then a philosopher can only impose his subjective categories onto finite reality which he claims is a manifestation of the infinite. A wholly self-sufficient philosophy consequently produces a dualism between reality and thought which it is the pretention of that philosophy to have overcome. Christian theology is therefore the factor

which overcomes this breach since it is present in reality before philosophy arises to convert it fully into thought while preserving its truth (Fackenheim, 1967:110,111).[11] By embracing Christian metaphysics and engaging in a phenomenological analysis of consciousness, Hegel claims that he has improved on the absolute idealism of his predecessors by finding a warrant for the human attainment of the Absolute standpoint.

This discussion has attempted to dispell the notion of Hegel as an obscure metaphysician deducing the world of finite appearance from an entirely a priori doctrine. Rather, it is more correct to say that Hegel was concerned to find justification for his doctrine of the absolute Idea by means of an examination of the finite. In this way, although this is to greatly oversimplify the matter, Hegelian philosophy lies uneasily between a deduction from first principles and empirical induction. True, the Absolute standpoint is presupposed throughout the entire odyssey and is indeed necessary to its completion, but it is not enough to say, as does Habermas, that it is merely presupposed for Hegel contends that the doctrine is warranted by an unprejudiced investigation of the historical world. Perhaps this can be expressed differently by suggesting that, on a grander scale, Hegel's philosophy is an anticipation of the much discussed hermeneutic circle; the finite can only be understood through the Absolute but the Absolute must be understood through an account of the finite.

The intention has been to portray the programmatic intentions of Hegelian philosophy and, as such, is quite separate from examining the extent to which the realization of the programme remained unfulfilled.

Numerous commentators (e.g. Flay, 1974:54) have remarked that for the Phenomenology to succeed on its own terms, it would have to remain entirely descriptive in the sense that the author, in portraying the path to absolute knowledge, could add nothing of his particular standpoint. The material itself must be inclusive and compelling. Yet even a superficial reading of the work which misses many of the classical literary allusions cannot but reveal the criterion of inclusion as somewhat arbitrary if not nearly random (Kaufman:1965:129).[10] Indeed, perhaps the first to take Hegel to task for not fulfilling the claims which he made for his philosophy was Karl Marx in his critique of the Philosophy of Right. Marx shows, even to the satisfaction of some non-Marxist philosophers (e.g. Westphal, 1974:56), that Hegel has proceeded from a conception of the rational state and interpreted the reality of the empirical state to fit this conception thus imposing the Idea on reality rather than justifying its presence solely by a non-arbitrary study of that reality as Hegel claims he has done.

Another element of the immanent critique of Hegelian philosophy has drawn attention to its eschatological claim. This issue is highly relevant in understanding how Mannheim's reliance on Hegelian thought is unsatisfactory.

There is a fundamental element of completion in Hegel's philosophy "which also has the sense of an eschatological end" (Lowith, 1971: 119). What has been pointed out by numerous commentators is that this eschatological element strongly contradicts the dynamic, dialectical element. "The spirit" Hegel says "is never at rest but always engaged in ever progressive motion" (1966:20). There is however, the intimation of completion and thus rest, on at least a metaphysical plane, in the

completed system as it is posited by Hegel. This poses a fundamental inconsistency. Hegel at once assumes pervasive dynamism yet as the paragraphs above have attempted to show, the entire enterprise of Hegelian philosophy is predicated and is only possible by virtue of a completion which reveals the absolute standpoint.

While Hegel does not assert that mundane and finite reality cease to exist and develop after his philosophical achievement, there does seem to be entailed the claim that, logically or ontologically speaking, nothing new or essential can occur after Hegel. This eschatological element has therefore become one of the most difficult puzzles considered by Hegel's commentators. Rosen (1977:42), however, may well be correct when he admits that "if we remain within the Hegelian teaching...then there is no solution to the dilemma of the end of history."

It is for such reasons that Hegel's philosophy, judged by its own rigourous criteria, is usually considered by even sympathetic commentators to have been a failure. This judgement is supported as well by the fact that really no contemporary philosophers are Hegelians, for, as Taylor (1975:538) observes, "no one actually believes his central ontological thesis." However, the aim of the above remarks has been to show that the failure is not to be ascribed to an inadequacy in the execution of the programme but rather to the immense scope of the programme itself - a complete reconciliation between the temporal and the eternal, the limited and the absolute. In the explosion of critique and interpretation which followed Hegel's death it is thus quite clear why, for example, Christian philosophy has often remained subjectively existential while historico-systematic thought

has been pushed inexorably toward relativism.

The argument presented above can be summarized as follows:

(1) The Absolute Idea, although a priori and transcendent, resides in some form and to some extent in the finite empirical moments which comprise its partial and progressive realization; each partial standpoint therefore possesses a ratio of Absolute truth.

(2) The progression of the Absolute is revealed by a horizontal (historical) and vertical (cognitively hierarchical) spiritual structure.

(3) In order to understand the finite world and human history in the way set out by points (1) and (2), Hegel and all those who follow his argument must presuppose that they have attained at least the general intimation of the Absolute standpoint.

(4) In principle, the Absolute standpoint is attained by means of speculative reason; this does not, however, involve intuitive leaps but insights which are warrented by immersion in the spiritual movement of the actual content of the finite world.

(5) Christian faith, while it is superceded by philosophical truth, anticipates the truth of philosophy although not in its final form. By pointing to the anticipation of Absolute truth in religion, Hegel claims to have overcome the problems involved in the claim of a finite historical individual to have attained the Absolute standpoint.

(6) Points (1) through (5) present the ideal claims of Hegel's system which since the time of his death have been consensually judged to have been unrealized. The intellectual response to Hegel can therefore be understood as the history of the dissolution of all the elements which Hegel sought to unite in a single comprehensive system.

Notes to Chapter II

1. "It is of course ironic that it is ...the interpretation of natural scientific theories by Kuhn, Feyerabend and others, that has played a large part in the revival of contemporary debate in the sociology of knowledge" (Hesse, 1978:11n). See also Phillips (1974:62).

2. It may be truely ironic to note that Karl Popper (1962:212f) has been perhaps most perceptive to the intimate link between Hegel and Mannheim. However, Popper's own interests are never submerged in favour of a fair treatment of either of these thinkers. This is unfortunate for it is one instance in which Popper has failed to observe the tenets os his own interpretive method of a rational reconstruction of a thinker's own "problem situation". This involves an unbiased attempt to understand a thinker's intellectual behavior by reference to his beliefs and aims on the one hand, and his contemporary intellectual milieu on the other (cf. Popper, 1972:172f). This, I submit, Popper has not attempted in the case of Mannheim.

3. Remmling's (1967) brief chapter on Hegel is suggestive in this regard but not sufficiently attentive to many of the subtleties in Hegel's thought. Much the same can be said of Horowitz's brief explication (1962:30-32).

4. Stark has not considered Hegel in this article. From one perspective, there is little doubt that he belongs in the category of the "conservative tradition" as Stark describes it. However, insofar as there is the anticipation of notions such as "false consciousness" in

Hegel's thought which, of course, motivates the Marxist tradition in the discipline, Hegel stands far from the conservative tradition. As will be seen, this kind of interpretive disparity which Hegelian thought supports is indicative of that philosophy.

5. It is interesting to note that a prominent analytic philosopher credits Hegel with being the first to understand the fully social foundations of conceptual frameworks (Sellars, 1963:16).

6. Hegel, Philosophy of Right. T.M. Knox (trans.). Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1956, p. 267. Cited in Paolucci (1974:113).

7. Hegel, The Logic of Hegel. William Wallace (trans.). Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1892, p. 24,25. Cited in Paolucci (1974:102).

8. The "beginning" of the Hegelian system provokes far more intricate problems than that it involves this kind of presupposition. Gurriere (1977) has recently explored some of these.

9. Lowith (1971:132f) shows that Feurbach was first to make the denial of Hegel's idealistic presuppositions the foundation of a critique of Hegelian philosophy.

10. Hegel, Philosophy of Right. T.M. Knox (trans.). Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1956, p. 306. Cited in Paolucci (1974:120).

11. Lowith (1967:125) has also stressed the important status of religion in Hegel's thought in a similar manner. By virtue of his "unquestioned acceptance of the absolute status of Christianity and the spirit founded upon it" the intimate relation between the absolute and the historical

components never results in the sort of problematic contradictions which a secular absolute idealism inherently contains.

CHAPTER III

HISTORICISM

Having considered those aspects of Hegelian philosophy which it is hoped will be illuminating in an examination of Mannheim, the topic of concern in this chapter is historicism, the second stream of Mannheim's dual intellectual inheritance. This is the easier of the two to portray for three reasons. First, and most important, Mannheim's debt to historicist thought is explicit and self-acknowledged whereas the Hegelian elements are either unacknowledged or mediated by some of the historicist thinkers to be discussed. The second reason is that, as a world view, the issues and problems subsumed under historicism are far easier for the modern reader to grasp and implement analytically. In contrast, gazing across what Lowith (1967:129) calls the "epochal boundary which separates us from Hegel" requires far more labour and the resulting analysis of that thinker, especially if the intent is to respect that boundary rather than to understand Hegel through Marx or analytic philosophy,[1] is bound to reflect the kind of difficulty which itself provides evidence for the historicist position. Finally, the current task is made easier by being highly circumscribed. As in the previous section, no attempt will be made to deal in depth with the whole range of the topic under consideration. What will be considered is the fate of the conception of Hegel's Absolute Idea in the thought of the historicist tradition. Attention will be focused primarily on Wilhelm Dilthey but other thinkers of his or other contemporary schools to which Mannheim responded will also be briefly considered.

As was discussed above, Hegel claimed that his thought had been

able to reconcile the infinite Absolute with finite empirical reality in a way which accounted for the latter's appropriate quotient of the ideal without disregarding its mundane facticity. The Absolute was thus shown to be present in every partial moment of its development through time. However the Procrustean nature of this conception and hence its undeniable failure especially at the level of politics and history was recognized almost immediately upon its pronouncement. This failure then issued in a glaring contradiction between the radical historicity of the system and its claims of Absolute completion.

One of the most fascinating episodes in intellectual history is the emergence of opposing trends and schools which streamed from the breakdown of Hegel's Absolute synthesis. So disparate were the elements taken up in the synthesis and so great the resultant tensions, that most of the major schools of continental thought since his time can be profitably related to his direct or derivative influence. The tradition under present consideration, historicism, can in a sense be understood as intimately related to the system's historicity but isolated from its metaphysical doctrines. This movement was already anticipated by the Young Hegelians as clearly seen in the work of Marx's colleague Arnold Ruge. For Ruge and the Young Hegelians who appropriated the Hegelian system in a critical and historically progressive manner (in opposition to Hegel's own restriction to historical retrospection), the Absolute spirit becomes the "spirit of the age" in the service, not of its self-contained aims, but of the progressive fulfillment of the future (Lowith, 1967:81). Once this transition is made, which is itself epochal, Hegel's conception of a self-contained Absolute truth apart from, while parallel to, history is necessarily reduced to a truth which

is wholly contained in the historical practice or thought of finite individuals.

Thus the Young Hegelians were the first to appropriate the historistic aspect of Hegel's philosophy while denying its metaphysical doctrines. But perhaps in their efforts to, in the Marxian idiom, retain this rational kernal, they failed to realize how drastically the denial of Hegelian metaphysics made the goal of finding meaning in history problematic. Historical meaning in Hegel's thought, although it is reflected in the attainment of the Absolute Idea in the form of political freedom, is primarily and most completely attained as conceptual or ontological freedom in the realm of Absolute Mind. Thus the ontological history of the Idea for Hegel is primary and its parallel immersion in human history is what renders this history meaningful. When the Absolute Idea is rejected as untenable or redundant, as was the case for the Young Hegelians and later by the historicist school, human history, while it retains a finite or relative meaning for each age, is immediately in danger of losing its absolute or cumulatively progressive meaning (Caponigri, 1974:16,17). The revolutionary optimism of the 1840's apparently allowed the immediate successors of Hegel to retain this sort of absolute faith in history without the support of Hegel's theocratic metaphysics; certainly, however, writers after the First World War should have been more circumspect.

Wilhelm Dilthey was perhaps the first to make explicit the relativistic conclusions which cannot be eradicated from a strong version of the historicist position. What makes Dilthey especially interesting in this regard is that at a generally conceived methodological level, he shared with Hegel certain basic conceptions. These included an openness to the whole range of historical forms and an ontological dualism between

the natural and human realms. Dilthey also adopts the Hegelian idiom of objective mind as the conceptual basis of the historical sciences whose "realm extends from the style of life and the forms of economic intercourse, to ... morality, law, the State, religion, art, science and philosophy".[2] It is significant, however, that Dilthey has included in objective mind the Hegelian trinity of Absolute mind - art, religion, and philosophy. Finally, both Hegel and Dilthey, in contrast to romantic thinkers, approached the multiplicity of historical phenomena with a categorical apparatus - Hegel with the Absolute Idea and its logical development and Dilthey with his Weltanschuungslehre.

However, these similarities are wholly abstract or formal in light of Dilthey's rejection of the primacy of the Absolute. Dilthey rejected Hegel's dualism of the temporal and absolute by relativizing and hence reducing the metaphysical structure of the Absolute as well as all metaphysical thought to a psychological variable manifested as a human need for metaphysical thought. The explication of these psychological responses then forms the basis of the theory of world views. Thus expunged of its metaphysical faith, Dilthey can protest against Hegel's absolute synthesis in these terms:

> How can this claim be maintained in the midst of the immense system of worlds, the multiplicity of forms of development which take place upon them, the limitless future which is hidden in the womb of this universe, continually marching forward to new structures. 3

Dilthey does accept Hegel's insight which became the methodological core of historicism that the nature of every human phenomenon is to be understood historically (Lowith, 1967:121). But the temporal succession of these forms becomes only a mere succession. In the place of Hegel's dynamic progression to the absolute standpoint, Dilthey, in the light of "the historical consciousness of the finitude of every historical

phenomenon, every human or social state, of the relativity of every sort of belief,"[4] develops a non-hierarchical, three-fold schema of world views which are related to the volitional, emotional, and cognitive varieties of human psychology. "This disposes of the view" Dilthey writes "which sees the task of history in the progress from relative values, obligations, norms or goals to unconditional ones. That would take us ... into the field of speculation ... from which even philosophy cannot wrest an assured answer."[5] Moreover, it would seem that the answers which philosophy would provide would be subordinate to their categorization as aspects of particular world views all of which make unconditional claims of validity. For its part, historical study can only observe "the unresolved strife of these unconditional assertions with one another."[6] An unmittigated relativism therefore results from the collapse of the Hegelian hierarchy, or more specifically from the inclusion of art, religion and philosophy which Hegel had placed at the pinnicle of Absolute mind, in the realm of objective mind.

However, it appears that Dilthey still retained the term "absolute". While he does affirm that "everything is relative", he continues by saying that

> absolute is only the nature of the spirit itself, manifesting itself in all this. Nor is there an end to the knowledge of this nature of the spirit, no final formulation, each is relative, each has done enough if it has sufficed for its age. The relativity of the notion of property logically led to the revolution of the social order; this great doctrine also led logically to the relativity of the doctrine of Christ. 7

The role of the absolute appears to be wholly abstract. Rather than Hegel's meticulous analysis and ultimately complete knowledge of a living Absolute, the concept, or perhaps it would be more correct to say the mere term, with Dilthey becomes austerely formal and refers only to the

unending and fully temporal historical process. The process is therefore absolute in the sense of containing all of the subject matter of the human studies or, ontologically, as being all of what there is in the human realm, knowledge of which, to reiterate, is always incomplete.

Before proceeding to an analysis of Mannheim, it may be profitable to investigate very briefly some other thinkers to whom he responded. It is hoped that the great brevity of these considerations will not make them wholly superfluous.

First there is Ernst Troeltsch to whom, as will be seen, Mannheim devoted an approving portion of his essay on historicism. Troeltsch was a theologian (and this point is perhaps not insignificant) who was drawn to historicism through his historical studies on the social and theological factions appearing during the history of Christianity. Although accepting in a Kantian fashion in his early work the primary and unconditional status of moral principles, he attempted to reconcile this view with a comparative and naturalistic approach to ethics. This led him to the idea of these moral principles becoming fully expressed through the historical development of human morality (Scharper, 1967:162). It was therefore through a comparative history of ethics that the problems posed by relativism could be overcome. In the first volume of his study Historicism and Its Problems he explicitly proposes a dynamic synthesis of the major traditions that had participated in European culture (Hughes, 1958:240). The solution presupposes, in his words, "the essential and individual identity of the finite spirits with the infinite spirit and ... their intuitive participation in the latter's content and mobile unity of life."[8] In material prepared for the uncompleted second volume of his study of historicism - Historicism and Its Conquest - Troeltsch identifies this infinite spirit as an ethical absolute which could be identified

through its historical development. Therefore "skepticism and relativism are only an apparently necessary consequence of modern intellectual conditions and of Historicism. They can be overcome by way of Ethics, and by way of the ideal forces emerging from history itself which are only mirrored and concentrated in Ethics."[9]

It should be clear that Troeltsch, faced with the denial of an absolute ordering principle of historical forms which historicism asserts, falls back on a truncated version of the Hegelian faith in history as the realm of the Absolute's realization. Unfortunately, he died before he faced the task of implementing this plan in a history of ethics which presumably would have been structurally analogous to Hegel's Phenomenology.

Troeltsch's synthetic solution to the relativism implied in historicism thus remained entirely programmatic. However, at least one of his contemporaries, Friedrich Meineke, in considering Troeltsch's position argued that he had made a fundamental error in proposing to find an ethical absolute in history (Hughes, 1958:241). While he shared Troeltsch's distress in the face of historical relativism, he ultimately had to reserve the individual's consciousness as a safeguard against ethical nihilism which he apparently found implicit in historicism (Fay, 1967:260). Thus, the "faith in final absolute values" could find no validation apart from the individual's intuition.[10] Meineke can therefore be understood as having seen the fruitlessness of even a proposed return to Hegel and because he still wished to retain some form of a concrete absolute (i.e. one that is not merely formal as Dilthey's appeared to be) he was forced to rely on subjective ethical intuitions. However, even this purely subjective faith in an immediate access to an eternal absolute is incompatible with a strong version of the historicist position for the thought of individuals as historical actors and the bearers of ideas is

precisely what is held to be related to historical conditions. Dilthey had already included such absolutist sentiments in the realm of the historically relative.

The dominant opposition school to that of historicism was the neo-Kantian tradition and its successor, phenomenology. Their contension is to be found in the extent to which the categorical structure of mind was held to be insulated from historical variability. In Dilthey, one of whose major projects was a Kantian style critique of historical reason, the two schools overlap considerably. Also in the Heidelberg school of neo-Kantianism of Windelband and Rickert who stressed the historical variability and value components of experience there is a significant similarity with historicist concerns (Beck, 1967:468-473). Although the content of this school cannot be considered, what is important in these thinkers, particularly Rickert, is the dualism between universal or transcendent ethical values and their historically particular counterparts. Although these universal values are non-sensible, they are knowable along the lines of Verstehen and enter into the judgements concerning their particular manifestations. However, the precise details of this epistemic relationship remained especially problematic for Rickert (Anchor, 1967:194; Mandelbaum, 1967:126-132).

In Mannheim's published writings references to Rickert are few and are restricted to footnotes. However Scheler, who maintained a particular-universal dualism similar to that of Rickert, was one of Mannheim's chief antagonists. This sort of dualism is accorded by Scheler an explicit and acknowledged accentuation. On this basis Scheler constructed what is here called an evaluative sociology of knowledge in which it was given to some social groups (primarily elites) and not others a greater "penetration into the metaphysical realm of values."[11] While the particular is itself

relative, the universal realm of values is a priori and self-sufficient and ultimately unknowable except by an apparently endless accretion of "unique cultural subjects working together in full solidarity."[12] Scheler can thus escape relativism in a purely assertive fashion (since nothing about the eternal can be demonstrated) "by hanging up, as it were, the sphere of absolute ideas and values ... quite violently much higher (ganz gewlatig viel hoher) above all actual value systems of history that have hitherto existed."[13]

In summary, the aim of this chapter has been to characterize some aspects of the contemporary intellectual scene which Mannheim confronted. That which can be considered especially significant in this regard is the fate of Hegel's Absolute which he had endeavoured to depict with meticulous concreteness. In general, three responses to Hegel's synthesis have been discussed. First there is Dilthey's rejection of the absolute and his subsequent espousal of relativism; second, there is Troeltsch's maintenance of Hegel's Absolute but in a significantly truncated fashion - the elaborate parallel historical development of the Idea in its purely logical form is eliminated and the subsequent absolute is reduced to a set of universal ethical principles; - finally, there is the withering away of the Absolute beyond the attainment of its historically partial expressions which threatens Rickert's epistemology but which seems explicitly advocated by Scheler. As will be seen, Mannheim rejected the last alternative and attempted to reconcile the first two.

Notes to Chapter III

1. This practice of reading Hegel through the mediation of another thinker seems characteristic of Marcuse's Marxian interpretation of Hegel (1960) and Findlay's (1958) analysis which tends to find in Hegel the anticipation of concerns close to those of contemporary analytic philosophy. This assertion would, of course, need to be much more rigourously substantiated than can be done here. If, however, these accounts are to some degree misinterpretations, this poses no threat, in principle, to historicism and thus relativism. That is, even a robust historicism or relativism is compatible with the existence of very general or indeterminate criteria of interpretive adequacy. It is possible therefore, as Nietzsche said (1973:49), to locate interpretations where "the text disappeared beneath the interpretation."

2. W. Dilthey, Gesammelte Schriften, VII, 208. In Hodges (1969:118).

3. Ibid., IV, 219. Cited in Lowith (1967:120).

4. Ibid., VII, 290. Cited in Hodges (1969:33).

5. Ibid., VII, 173. Cited in Hodges (1969:146,147).

6. Ibid.

7. Ibid., IV, 250. Cited in Lowith (1967:122).

8. E. Troeltsch, Gesammelte Schriften, III, vii, viii. Cited in Hughes (1958:240).

9. E. Troeltsch, Historismus und seine Uberwindung. Cited in Hughes (1958:240,241).

10. F. Meinecke, Die Entstehung des Historismus. Cited in Hughes (1958:244).

11. M. Schler, Die Wissenformen und die Gesellschaft, p. 182. Cited in Becker and Dahlke (1973:208).

12. Ibid., p. 14. Cited in Mannheim (1952c:167).

13. Ibid., p. 14. Cited in Wolff (1971: lxvii n. 42).

CHAPTER IV

MANNHEIM'S HEGELIAN PATH

Introduction

The preceding two chapters have presented two facets of Mannheim's intellectual heritage insofar as they can illuminate the aims which he ascribed to the sociology of knowledge. Apart from his conceptual and empirical studies in this area, Mannheim concurrently attempted to delineate the epistemological consequences of the sociology of knowledge. This assumed the form, shared by all versions of the evaluative conception of the discipline, of assigning truth values as a result of sociological investigations to the knowledge produced by individuals living within the cognitively determinate confines of a given social context. Mannheim's sociological epistemology is concerned with the obvious difficulties which such an effort presents and in the present chapter his early efforts, that is the positions developed before the publication of Ideology and Utopia, are to be considered.

Apart from the significant divergence of their philosophical views and intellectual products, Mannheim shares with Hegel a fundamental conviction that the existence of intellectual dispute and conflict requires that one do more than assert one's own position while merely refuting or assimilating only that which is congenial from other positions. Still, both thinkers found intellectual conflict distressing and consequently launched efforts to find some ordering principle or criterion which could serve to ameliorate such conflict in a synthetic fashion. Mannheim's most general interest was therefore the "discovery of the position from which a total perspective would be possible" (1936:160). Indeed, this is the unifying theme which connects both his early sociology of knowledge period

with the subsequent efforts at social engineering.

Given the inherent and enormous difficulties in this endeavour, it is not surprising that Mannheim as well as his commentators remain unsatisfied with his results in this regard. The aim of this chapter is to understand why his initial synthetic efforts are so unconvincing and ultimately contradictory. As mentioned in Chapter I, this task is made considerably easier by Mannheim's self-criticism. What is required is to follow his own thought to the point where the greatest doubt is expressed and then in a single further step to complete the argument and thus refute it. Briefly, this added final step is achieved by drawing out the consequences of the contradictory amalgam of Hegelian and historicist elements contained in the position.

Mannheim's Interpretation of Hegel

In none of his published writings does Mannheim discuss Hegel's philosophy in length. In "Conservative thought" (1971b), Hegel is treated sociologically as a leading representative of this tradition. However, while this represents his most sustained analysis of Hegel, it is not a philosophical analysis, or what Mannheim called an "interpretation based on 'intrinsic consideration'" (1971a:131). Therefore one must attempt to infer his interpretation of Hegel from widely dispersed and compressed passages. Yet doing so is important, for it is to be argued that his brief and unsystematic appraisal contained some general mis-interpretations and, moreover, on the strength of such mis-interpretations he was led along a version of the philosophical route which Hegel had exhausted a century before.

Mannheim's response to Hegel contains both critical and sympathetic elements. In a fashion similar to that of Hegel's marxist commentators,

Mannheim is primarily in disagreement with what he takes to be the speculative element in Hegel's philosophy. He contrasts, for example, the anti-speculative position of historicism as a "reaction against Hegel's venture in the philosophy of history which, with its ready-made assumptions, had proved premature in content and method alike" (1952a:34). Elsewhere, Mannheim chides Hegel for the circularity of the system; it contains, he writes "a conclusion given in advance" and thus "the discussion ... is being steered towards a predetermined solution" (1971d:293). Hegel is therefore shown "to present the whole of historical reality as rationally deducible" (1971b:150). Mannheim clearly shares the conception of Hegel as a rationalist who conjured up a set of obscure metaphysical first principles and then proceeded to reproduce through a determinate application of the dialectic method the entire course of human history. Mannheim also points out that Hegel effected a completion of this process: "this terminal stage of the Absolute as an actuality was reached both in the State and in his own philosophical thinking" (1971c:255). He then immediately switches to a sociological appraisal of this completion and finds "that it is nothing but the Prussian State of Hegel's time from the standpoint of which he was in fact thinking" (1971c:255).

Mannheim therefore rejects the a priori and the speculative aspect of Hegel's philosophy as unsuited to an era which was concerned to make, in an appropriate way, the human or cultural sciences scientifically respectable. In this respect he is firmly in the tradition of neo-Kantian or neo-Hegelian German thought. Also typical of this tradition is its confrontation with relativism and Mannheim's solution of this problem builds upon a notion of dialectical development. This notion will soon be treated in detail but what is significant here is that Mannheim himself understood this to be clearly related to Hegelian thought, although as an

improved adaptation. In considering, in "Historicism", the forms of historical movement he considers three "types of theories of evolution" of which "that of dialectical evolution" is appropriate for the subject matter of the human sciences. Mannheim further acknowledges that the theory "goes back to Hegel" but asserts that he has "presented it in modified form" (1952b:123) by severing supposedly irrational cultural manifestations such as art and religion from its purview. As will be discussed below, Mannheim claims that it is this theory of dialectical evolution which will enable historicist thinkers to overcome relativism. He asserts that it is "the only solution of the general problem of how to find ... standards and norms for a world outlook which has become dynamic" (1952b:132). That it is adopted from Hegelian philosophy is not problematic for "contrary to earlier philosophical attempts, this ... attempt to grasp the overall inner meaning of this historical transformation process with the help of the category of totality ... is no longer deductively based on a priori first principles, but is derived from immediate contact with the historical material itself" (1952b:127).

In the other central essay of this period, "The problem of a sociology of knowledge", Mannheim acknowledges that Hegel "identified the 'essence' and 'absolute' with the historical process and tied the fate of the absolute to that of the evolution of the world". He applauds this notion and then continues to say that "even though his detailed propositions cannot be accepted, his general position is closest to our immediate orientation" (1952c:175). This passage is interesting in two ways, first as another affirmation of Mannheim's attempt to adopt the Hegelian programme, and also because, of all the passages in which Hegel is discussed, it clearly reveals the most insight into Hegel's own aims. In nearly all of the other interpretive passages, however, Mannheim

exhibits, at best, only an incomplete understanding of Hegel. This claim can be supported by recalling the interpretation of Hegel's philosophy developed in Chapter II.

There it was suggested that Hegel did not merely impose in a circular fashion his speculative categories on the empirically real content but rather attempted and claimed to have found a kind of inductive warrant for those categories through an analysis of consciousness and Christian faith. It is certainly correct to say that the Idea as an a priori entity is said to exist by Hegel, but attaining knowledge of it is a far more subtle process than Mannheim appreciated. In brief, just as Mannheim proposes to "make immediate contact with the historical material itself", so also does Hegel insist that "scientific knowledge ... demands precisely that we surrender to the life of the object or ... that we confront and express its inner necessity" (1966:80). By doing so, Hegel did not claim, nor did he ever intend, in Mannheim's words to "present the whole of historical reality as rationally deducible" (1971b:150). Rather this "surrender" is guided and is also intended to reveal the Idea as a principle of selection which operates in philosophical knowledge. This method is precisely what differentiates philosophy from empirical science in Hegel's hierarchical system of cognitive endeavors. On the basis of this selection, philosophical knowledge is able to isolate from the chaotic wealth of the finite the Idea in its particular moments. Here again, Mannheim's interpretation seems less than subtle.

In regard to the contentious issue of Hegel's relation to the Prussian state, not all commentators are agreed on the extent to which that state constituted a completion of the Idea. In any case, there is good reason to believe that the state as a constituent of Objective mind

is less central in Hegel's scheme than is Christin religion as the penultimate attainment of Absolute mind. Therefore, both philosophically and sociologically, religion is the more essential standpoint of the Hegelian system. This interpretation, at odds with Mannheim's, accords more closely with a perception of Hegel's self-understanding offered by numerous commentators.

In summary, Mannheim participated in an intellectual discourse which became fashionable after the revival of interest in Hegel in the latter decades of the nineteenth century and which is aptly expressed in a title of a work by B. Croce: What is Living and What is Dead in Hegel's Philosophy (1907). Although published aspects of this endeavour are limited, they reveal a rejection of the transcendent elements of the pure logic and what Mannheim understood as a non-speculative adaptation of the Hegelian notion of a dialectical progression in history toward an ever higher synthesis. Whether this adaptation represents a significant departure from Hegelian philosophy is to be doubted. As such, the cogency of this programme within an historicist world view is also questionable.

Mannheim's Synthetic Negation of Relativism

There are three central essays in which Mannheim discusses the perspective of and the problems implicit in historicism: "On the interpretation of Weltanschuung" (1923), "Historicism" (1924), and "The problem of the sociology of knowledge" (1925). There is a dual movement in the development of his thought during this brief period. First toward a greater concern with the situation of contemporary thought or the sociology of knowledge from an interest in a more broadly conceived historical perspective and second, a dialectical consideration of the

problem of relativism - dialectical in the sense that the relativist position is presented in the first essay, its solution proposed in the second and then critically examined in the last. The present section is concerned with Mannheim's treatment of this problem, especially in order to show the Hegelian nature of its solution. It should first be noted that the issues involved in Mannheim's development from historicism in its original formulation to its transformation as a foundation for the sociology of knowledge are not essential for the nature of the conceptual problems raised. Mannheim himself makes this point in a brief consideration of "Historicism and Sociology" in part IV of "Historicism". The sociology of knowledge takes up the essential elements of the historicist position by compressing its perspective onto a particular contemporary scene. Both therefore involve essentially the same conceptual problem - the multiplicity of perspectives - and therefore the issues raised by historicism are entirely relevant to those raised in the sociology of knowledge.

In his essay "On the interpretation of Weltanschuung", Mannheim first takes up the historicist position. This is the conception of all intellectual, artistic and cultural products as being related to a global world view which itself is pre-theoretical or irrational. Mannheim's concern is with a methodological analysis of the concept, or more specifically, with how the phenomenon of world views can be known and then employed by the human sciences which are themselves rational or theoretical. The general concern of this essay is therefore the paradox of confronting the irrational with the rational or, in Mannheim's words, "the question whether and how the a-theoretical can be 'translated' into theory" (1952a:39). Mannheim sees this to be an important issue because of the potentially great methodological utility of the concept. Here,

Mannheim initiates one of the most pervasive themes of his work, that of synthesis. In this early essay this concern is expressed in quite neutral or methodological terms. It is only the remedy for what he identifies as hyper-specialization in the human sciences. He wishes to overcome this specialization by means of an analysis of the methodological implications of the concept of world view so that the "particular findings" of these disciplines can be "fit ... into some global historical scheme" (1952a:37). Moreover, he identifies this task as related to an evolving Zeitgeist by speaking of it in terms of "the turn towards synthesis" and as a "need". Thus "methodology seeks but to make explicit in logical terms what is de facto going on in living research" (1952a:37).

Although the details of the analysis in this essay are not presently relevant, two observations should be made. First is the evident and acknowledged influence of Dilthey's theory of Weltanschuungen. Especially important is the rejection of an autonomous and absolute realm of theory as the impetus to theoretical activity in life. Rather it is the irrational life conditions themselves which give rise to such activities. Also significant is what is probably Mannheim's first confrontation in a published piece with relativism.[1]

In examining three kinds of meaning which are applicable to cultural or theoretical objects, Mannheim asserts that the kind of meaning which reveals the underlying structure of the producer's world view and is therefore appropriate for interpretation of these objects is that of "documentary meaning". But "unlike the two other types of interpretation, documentary interpretation has the peculiarity that it must be performed anew in each period and that any single interpretation is profoundly influenced by the location within the historical stream

from which the interpreter attempts to reconstruct the spirit of a past epoch" (1952a:61). Given that documentary interpretation is perspectival in that "the nature of the subject has an essential bearing on the content of knowledge" (1952a:61), the problem of the accuracy of interpretations arises. After noting two general and formal, but indecisive, criteria, Mannheim admits that "several different interpretations of an epoch can be correct" in terms of these criteria. However he insists that not "every documentary interpretation has the same claim to be accepted" (1952a:62). While conflicting interpretations can in a formal sense be correct, "we can ... ask which of them is most adequate, i.e. which of them shows the greatest richness, the greatest substantial affinity with the object" (1952a:62). At this point, a version of the Hegelian programme of dialectical evolution is first evoked. When contradictions among interpretations exist

> what we have to do is to translate the less adequate (but still correct) interpretations into the language of the more adequate ones. In this fashion, the image obtained in the earlier, still inadequate interpretation will be 'suspended' in the Hegelian double acception of this term - that is, the earlier organizing centre of the interpretation will be discarded, but whatever was incompletely grasped will be preserved in the new centre of organization (1952a:62).

It is probably more precise to say that Mannheim skirts the issue of relativism here under the guise of a criterion of interpretive adequacy. It is in "Historicism" that the issue is fully confronted and there also that a solution is proposed through a revival of Hegelian philosophy.

The essay "Historicism" commences with a verbal fanfare for the historicist position: historicism "epitomizes our Weltanschuung", it is "the very basis on which we construct our observations of the socio-cultural reality" and "provides us with a world view of the same

universality as that of the religious world view of the past" (1952b:84, 85). Mannheim still maintains a consistent reflexivity vis a vis the historicist position. It is not theoretical insights which have revealed and established historicism but rather "the historic process itself through which we lived has turned us into historicists ... historicism exists only since the problem involved in the new ways of facing life ... reached the level of self-consciousness" (1952b:85,86). However, an idealistic tone still manages to creep in in the form of the suggestion of a supra-temporal mentalistic process in which historicism participates. Mannheim notes that "historicism ... is a Weltanschuung" and he then goes on to say that there are particular necessities which this Weltanschuung should fulfil "at the present stage of the development of consciousness" (1952b:85). He also maintains that "historicist theory fulfils its own essence only by managing to derive an ordering principle from this seeming anarchy of change" (1952b:86). This seems to suggest that the direction of the theoretical position or its "essence" is removed from the influence of the historical considerations which initiated it. Still at this point, the idealistic tone is very much just that and its identification requires the kind of documentary interpretation which is, by Mannheim's characterization, unavailable to the producer of the text.

After introducing the historicist position, Mannheim shows how it overthrows what he refers to as the "doctrine of the autonomy of reason" which is intrinsic to many forms of idealism. He shows that the assertion of the doctrine of a static atemporal form of reason and its corresponding autonomous theoretical sphere is related to particular historical conditions arising with the emergence of modern society from that of the Middle Ages. He considers this insight to constitute

confirming evidence for historicism: "the hypostatized non-temporal axioms of the philosophy of Reason" are shown to be "bound to the historical-philosophical position and its corresponding 'life basis' " (1952b:96).

Mannheim also initiates another pervasive theme in connection with what he would call in Ideology and Utopia a 'relativizing' procedure by asserting that the "charge of relativism" which is directed at historicism implicitly presupposes this inadequate conception of absolute, a-historical truth and falsehood. But it is clearly incorrect to suppose, as does Hamilton (1974:127), that Mannheim "espouses" relativism in these early works. Rather, he is primarily concerned to develop a solution which he thinks is made available by historicist insights. There are many passages in which he speaks of the "problem" or "threat" of relativism (e.g. 1952b:127, 128; 1952c:176) and he further asserts that "certain brands of relativism are not too difficult to refute" (1952b:86). After introducing the historicist position, Mannheim devotes most of the remaining parts of the essay to a solution of this problem.[2]

The solution is developed on the basis of a theory which exists in germinal form in the previously discussed essay but which is now explicitly put forward. The theory is that history is a monistic and evolutionary process which is teleologically oriented and which can be known by means of progressively comprehensive and true systems of knowledge during the course of its development. In short, "the absolute itself is unfolding in a genetic process" it therefore "has its truth in its progress" (1952b:130).

In the second part of the essay and by way of introducing this theory Mannheim reviews the work by Ernst Troeltsch, Der Historismus und seine Probleme. As mentioned in Chapter III, his review is a positive one and he concludes by endorsing Troeltsch's view of cognitive progress in the discernment of absolute standards of judgement. "Thoroughly worked out" Mannheim writes, "this theory ought to lead to the demonstration of the existence of 'progress' in the sequence of the various historical theories of successive epochs" (1952b:105,6). He realizes however, that Troeltsch failed to develop and apply the conception and he then proceeds to elaborate and presumably analyze its foundations so as to allow for future empirical application. The essay therefore remains entirely programmatic.

Like Troeltsch, Mannheim's general motivation is to find in historicism a solution to the problem of relativism. Before discussing this in detail however, it will be useful to discuss an approach to the problem of relativism which Mannheim feels is completely misguided. In this approach, eternally valid and absolute standards of value are posited and these are taken to be definitive with regard to judging discordant empirical manifestations of values. In explicit dialogue with Scheler and at least implicit dialogue with Rickert, Mannheim intends to show that by keeping the Absolute above the historical or by seeing it as static and eternal, no connection can ever be made between the two spheres. This approach therefore fails to provide any concrete standard which would allow one to overcome relativism. He writes:

> There is no more relativistic solution than that of a static philosophy of Reason which acknowledges a transcendence of values 'in themselves', and sees this transcendence guaranteed in the form of every concrete judgement, but relegates the material content of the judgement into the sphere of utter

> relativity - refusing to recognize in the actual historical cosmos of realizations of value any principle of approximation to the transcendent values as such (1952b:128).

In contrast to those who "take refuge in the doctrine of the absoluteness of formal values" (1952b:128), Mannheim asserts that "guarantees of objective truth which really overcome relativism can only flow from material evidence" (1952b:128). Thus "we should not imagine the truth as one that can be grasped from above the historical stream" (1952b:119).

It is clear that there is a general correspondence between Mannheim's critique of Scheler and (implicitly) Rickert and Hegel's critique of Schelling. Both Hegel and Mannheim are wary of introducing a realm of eternal essences or standards which cannot in principle be coordinated with empirical historical manifestations. Hegel is concerned that this procedure cannot reconcile and take into account the partial and conflicting manifestations of the truth of the absolute Idea. This parallels Mannheim's dual concern with historicism's careful attention to historical detail and the overcoming of that discordant detail in a monistic historical meaning.

The significance of the similarity of outlook between Hegel and Mannheim is heuristic rather than logical. Contrasting the 'methodological' similarity of their programmes with the metaphysical disparities underlying their respective efforts provides important insights as to why Mannheim's effort to find the absolute in history lacks even the internal cogency of Hegel's similar effort. It is in this connection also that Mannheim's comparative lack of insight into this methodological dimension of Hegel becomes significant. Perhaps if he had understood the close similarity of their approaches rather than understanding his approach as a version of 'standing Hegel on his feet' he would have seen

the very fundamental contradiction in his solution to relativism. In order to document this contradiction it must first be shown in what way and to what extent Mannheim's conception of historical knowledge is similar to Hegel's in both intent and terminology.

It must be emphasized that Mannheim, though he recognized in a limited way his debt to Hegel, maintained that his approach to the problem of relativism never deviated from the historicist position. Rather, as cited above, he felt that it represented the fulfillment of its essence. Further, he argued that "historicism veers away from relativism" (1952b:104) precisely because of the recognition that theoretical constructions are founded on the world view or, equivalently, the irrational life basis of the producer. Mannheim quite correctly understands that it does veer away from the nihilistic or totally skeptical versions of relativism by virtue of the identity of the subject and object. Because standards and concrete values "have developed ... out of the same historical process which they have to help interpret, there exists ... a subtle bond between thought and reality" (1952b:104). But Mannheim of course realizes that the main thrust of relativism questions the possibility of inter-perspectivally valid knowledge. Thus, asserting that each perspective can develop coherent knowledge of its own products and of reality and is also a basis for the apprehension of other perspectives does not go a long way toward overcoming relativism in the stronger, objective sense which he wishes. He realizes therefore, "that it is a question of life and death for historicism to be able to link the [knowledge produced by] various epochs together in a meaningful evolutionary pattern" (1952b:107). This monistic and teleological condition is also significant in that, as Mannheim notes (1952b:118),

it represents a divergence from the historicism of Dilthey whose theory of world views attempted only to categorize the various epochs or perspectives rather than hierarchically order them.

The intent of the programme to achieve such an ordering is entirely Hegelian although the range of application is restricted to those subject matters which admit of dialectical evolution. These fields, which exclude physical science, "religion and art, ethos and erotic" (1952b:111), show progress "in that they state a world view from an ever higher point of view, from a more comprehensive centre where the earlier insights are 'integrated' with the new system" (1952b:117). This provides "a historico-philosophical hierarchy of unique temporal levels [which] can be objectively established by analyzing and contrasting the systematic points of origin of these systems" (1952b:118, 119). The criterion used to establish this ordering is the degree of comprehensiveness of the system or the extent to which a system is "broader in scope than preceeding ones" (1952b:118). Moreover, "it can always be shown which ... system is more comprehensive" or which "position allows a deeper penetration into the object" (1952b:120,122). Thus both Mannheim and Hegel commence from an observation of the multiplicity of perspectives and standpoints of knowledge. However, instead of despairing in the face of this circumstance, both see the very fact of such multiplicity as the basis which allows for the attainment of absolute or fully objective truth in which the plurality of meanings and truths gives way to a single conception that accounts for and harmonizes the entirety of what has come before.

Mannheim admits that "there is a 'utopia', a logical postulate underlying this historical conception of philosophical truth, namely,

that the overall philosophical process does possess its truth" (1952b: 119) but he insists that the historicist respect for careful empirical study is not violated since "these utopias ... are in no way arbitrarily contrived speculations ... what they express is, rather, a concrete structural insight ... for which the impetus is given by the concrete pattern of the historical movement itself" (1952b:119, 120). Having offered a foundation for a historicist resolution of relativism, Mannheim concludes the essay with a flourish of Hegelianisms. The theory asserts no less than that "the absolute itself is unfolding in a genetic process ... in categories which are moulded by the unfolding of the material contact of the genetic flux itself" (1952b:130). Therefore, "our world view is nothing other than the building up of an intellectual cosmos centered around supra-theoretical realities which the supra-rational genetic process in whose element we live, again and again places at the centre of our experience" (1952b:133).

The above discussion is intended to support the claim that Mannheim did indeed take a Hegelian path in search of the aboslute. There are of course disparities involved in these 'paths' which will serve to point out the contradictions which are immanent in Mannheim's programme. Such disparities can initially be identified by comparing the richness and detail of Hegel's philosophy with Mannheim's more restricted and entirely programmatic version of historical teleology. In the place of Hegel's fully worked out story of a dynamic world spirit reaching completion in and through man's attainment of the absolute standpoint, Mannheim substitutes compressed and cryptic expressions such as the "dynamic impluse" or simply a "utopia" to refer to the attainment of the absolute. This might imply that Mannheim was not

entirely comfortable in offering this line of thought as a solution to relativism.

In addition to this terminological vagueness, an evident external criticism which can be raised concerns the difficulties which are involved in the criterion of evaluation of the progressively higher manifestations of historical knowledge which analysis is said to reveal. The single criterion which Mannheim advances is that of "comprehensiveness". What are to be ordered as to their comprehensiveness are "centres of organization" which reorganize into a contemporary thought system all of what is essential of past philosophical systems. These "centres" are structured around a world view; "they are dependent on the new life situation which ... expresses the truth of the epoch concerned" (1952b:117). Yet "these systems are ... not all equal in value ... they state a world view from an ever higher point of view, from a more comprehensive centre" (1952b:117). Apart from this and the assertion that in regard to shifts of these centres "it can easily be shown which ... is more comprehensive" (1952b:120), very little is said about just what factors represent greater comprehensiveness. The single factor that appears to be related to comprehensiveness is the extent to which it "allows a deeper penetration into the object" (1952b:122).

In contrast to Mannheim's optimism, however, the history of science and thought seems to support the view that all such simple epistemic criteria are in fact far more complex than at first appears and their consequent application therefore can in principle always be contested. In physical science, for example, this situation has arisen around the criterion of simplicity for theory selection. The better theory, many have asserted, between two which have equal explanatory

power is the simpler.[3] However, no one has developed a straightforward definition of simplicity and it is probably the case that no one will since there is an ineradicable ambiguity built into the concept. A similar ambiguity applies to comprehensiveness. Is the centre which organizes the empirical material around a few central tenets or axioms and thus reduces complexity in order to produce a clearly definitive world view more comprehensive than one which assumes a degree of opacity in an attempt to reproduce empirical reality within an intricately interwoven set of central axioms?

The problem is compounded because comprehensivesness as a criterion of cognitive value is distinct from other more straightforward material criteria related to content of the systems. Mannheim specifically says that competing systems may all be correct in that they all "cover the total range of cultural manifestations of an epoch, accommodating each without contradiction" (1952a:62). Further, all must "satisfy the concrete historical evidence" and "present a consistent and coherent picture" (1952b:122). But after these conditions, certainly themselves problematic, are established it is "always possible" to "ascertain which psychic position [from which systems are constructed] allows deeper penetration into the object" (1952b:122) so as to arrive at "truth ... as it is embodied in self-contained philosophical systems, which grow out of the various centres that form within the stream" (1952b:119). The least that can be said is that Mannheim has not convincingly demonstrated that this is possible without encountering objections which are traceable to intellectual and material interests which are attached to the various centres.

These two criticisms — terminological vagueness and questions

of the applicability of criteria — are external in the sense that they can be appropriately made without the lengthy consideration of the Hegelian background of Mannheim's intellectual position. Considered next are two immanent criticisms which relate more closely to this metaphysical disparity between Hegel and Mannheim and which show why these externally viewed problems are unavoidable. It is perhaps suggestive that the first of these criticisms relates to a difficulty in the historicist phase of the programme which arises from the absolutist presupposition implicit in the Hegelian influence and, conversely, the second criticism relates to a difficulty in the absolutist phase posed by the historicist presuppositions.

Problems and Critique

In the third essay of the series, "The problem of a sociology of knowledge" (1925), Mannheim raises some crucial questions about the cogency of the evaluative programme offered in "Historicism". In short, his espousal of historicism returns, after a Hegelian excursion, to haunt him.

Despite such questions, the programme in this essay remains largely intact:

> The historicist standpoint, which starts with relativism, eventually achieves an absoluteness of view, because in its final form it posits history itself as the Absolute; this alone makes it possible that the various standpoints, which at first appear to be anarchic, can be ordered as component parts of a meaningful overall process (1952c:172).

Accordingly, Mannheim recognizes that "the metaphysical assumption that is involved here ... is that the global process within which the various intellectual standpoints emerge is a meaningful one" (1952c:177). At this point Mannheim concedes that "we do not want to deny that

historicism does encounter difficulties — and they arise precisely at this point" (1952c:172). Although history and historical knowledge are monistically meaningful, "we cannot see such a goal-meaning for our own period ... we can only make conjectures about the total pattern of meaning" (1952c:172). It follows that "the future goal-meaning of the totality of history will be seen differently, according to what particular point one occupies in the total process" (1952c:172, 173). This admission is of course a core insight of historicism and Mannheim continues in a consistent fashion by conceding that "our own intellectual standpoint is located within one of these rival positions; hence, we can only have a partial and perspectivic view of what is unfolding, and also of the past" (1952c:177). Thus, "a fully comprehensive systematic principle is not yet discovered", but, because of "an inherent tendency to account for the whole of reality ... we may believe that a central systematic idea will eventually be found which will in fact permit a synthesis of the entire process" (1952c:178).

It is at this point that Mannheim admits that the doctrine cannot "fully overcome the antinomies inherent in it" (1952c:179). The first of these "antinomies" is the problem of eschatology or the contradiction between dynamism and completeness which plagues Hegelian philosophy as well. The second is that when the "fully comprehensive principle" is found, one would be forced to assume that "thought would no longer be existentially determined" (1952c:178). "The only possible solution" to these difficulties "is, then, to recognize that one's own standpoint, though relative, constitutes itself in the element of truth" (1952c:178).

This is clearly unsatisfactory, for the solution to an intellectual problem is not to be found in its restatement. Furthermore, it

is not at all clear whether Mannheim recognized the severity of the contradictions he is involved in for not only can his doctrine not "fully overcome" its "antinomies", it cannot even start to find a solution unless one of the contradictory elements is given up. Either a consistently relativistic or absolutist foundation for the sociology of knowledge seems therefore to exhaust the possible conceptual foundations for the discipline. Developing the first of these options is the task of Part Three. The following remarks however are intended to establish that Mannheim's attempt to reconcile the two options is unacceptable in his own terms. Two immanent criticisms of his doctrine are sufficient to establish this.

First, the absolute, or the "fully comprehensive principle" is entirely superfluous for any particular research programme which would proceed along historicist principles. If the cultural and intellectual products of an epoch are to be understood as emmanating from their own world view which strives to encompass the whole of reality, and if "the concrete pattern of the absolute is different in every age" (1952b:131) then, in terms of the richness and degree of insight of the documentary interpretation which is developed, what benefit is achieved by relating a particular world view or a centre of systematization to a fully conprehensive principle which may be, by assumption, discernable to us but not to the age and its world view which is being interpreted? Even if it is conceded that the "succession of steps in itself harbours truth", the problem remains. For, on historicist principle, interest is placed on the truths of various epochs which are the primary data to be accounted for in their own terms with as little contamination from the world view of the interpreter as possible. Therefore, in terms of this

methodological interest, the absolute which is derived from the succession of world views is unnecessary.

This criticism is not necessarily damaging to Mannheim's position for he could acknowledge it as a methodological danger but still maintain that discerning an absolute is important for the extra-methodological contribution which historicism yields as a solution to relativism. However the second criticism is far more crucial for it shows how Mannheim's absolutist content denies the basic assumption of historicism which he repeatedly emphasizes is at the core of his sociology of knowledge.

The intrinsic contradiction which resides in Mannheim's thought in this period is to be found in a dualism which idealism asserts and which historicism denies. Idealism, in many of its extant forms and certainly in Hegel's expression, asserts that there is some mentalistic, spiritual or egoistic reality in which humans may participate and know the truth of but which remains in some manner apart from them either by being temporally prior or ontologically supreme. It is precisely this dualism which historicism, in Dilthey's as well as Mannheim's formulation, denies. A core tenet of historicism is that the world view to which all intellectual creations are to be related is "a-theoretical" (Mannheim's term) and emmanates from the life situation and not from an autonomous and ontologically primary realm which contains thought and reason. In contradiction to this tenet however, Mannheim's search for an absolute in history is only intelligible on the idealistic assumption of dualism and it is this dualism which again and again creeps back into his language.

For the consistent historicist, there can be no succession of

truths which result in one truth. Those truths which are claimed by their proponents as eternal and absolute are, in Mannheim's later terminology, 'relatived' by the historicist and thus become merely another truth. It is certainly correct to say with Mannheim "that there is an inherent tendency of all human thought to account for the whole of reality" (1952c:178). But instead of locating this urge in some universal feature of human life which is irrational or pre-theoretical, Mannheim subtly slips into the terms of the idealistic dualism by asserting that "if we extrapolate" from this tendency "a central systematic idea will eventually be found which will in fact permit a synthesis of the entire process" (1952c:178). But then he immediately slips back to the historicist view and asserts "we cannot suppose this grand synthesis to be pre-existent — if for no other reason, because the real situation which could call forth such a synthesis has not yet materialized" (1952c:178).

By appealing to the historical future, Mannheim has attempted to defer the contradiction which his idealistic dualism inexorably poses to his historicist foundations. That is, if history is a monistic and meaningful whole, and if the truth of this meaning advanced from a particular position is not to be merely another partial realization or approximation of this truth, then when any group in any historical epoch can legitimately assert that the "grand synthesis" is achieved, they would of necessity have to posit that the content of that synthesis is in some sense absolute and timeless or that it exists in some realm beyond their own assertion or consciousness of it. This is precisely the conclusion which Hegel reaches when the Absolute is attained in his philosophy. But it is the possibility or reality of such a realm which

Mannheim in his historicist phase denies. Manheim's appeal to what seems to be an historicist or sociological notion of a "real situation" (1952c:178) is quite beside the point. For whatever that situation would consist in, its participants would still have to make the claim that their grand synthesis was eternal and transcendent with regard to that situation. This requirement also reveals the manner in which Mannheim encounters an eschatological contradiction. For on attainment of the Absolute, the dynamic process must in some sense be considered completed for there can be no further progression if that attainment is truely more than an additional perspective. Hegel was forced on pain of contradicting his dynamic presupposition to this position but Mannheim, who mentions this difficulty in Hegelian philosophy (1952c:178), appears to feel that this eschatological condition can be deleted without removing an essential condition for positing an Absolute meaning for history. Again, one is forced to wonder to what extent Mannheim's difficulties can be traced to his inadequate understanding of Hegel.

The metaphysical disparity which exists between Hegel and Mannheim justifies the programme to find the Absolute in history for the former but not for the latter. For Hegel, this programme, attempted in the philosophy of history, the history of philosophy and the Phenomenology provides a subjective certainty for the doctrine of an a priori transcendent Absolute. Christian faith, again, a real factor for Hegel but not Mannheim, reveals the truth of the doctrine and demonstrates the partial attainment of its truth before the advent of theoretical thought. It is also this doctrine in all of its complexity which produces the immense content of the Hegelian opi which, albeit

in a circular fashion, achieved the hierarchical ordering of standpoints in terms of their cognitive value which Mannheim could only project by means of single and feeble criterion of "comprehensiveness". In short, Mannheim's Hegelian path, by virtue of a dualism which can never be acknowledged, lacks the internal cohesiveness of Hegelian philosophy.

Finally, that philosophy can be employed to aptly characterize the whole endeavor. Mannheim in his early works is plagued by a version of what Hegel called the "unhappy consciousness". Mannheim of course, never asserts that he has achieved "the position from which a total view is possible" (1952b:130). He says "without qualms that we do not claim to have spoken the last word on this subject" (1952b:130) and "our own account has merely 'perspectivic truth' " (1952b:131n). The preceding discussion demonstrates that, on historicist assumptions, no last word is in principle even possible. If there is an account which claims to to be total and absolute then the explanation of such sentiments is to be in existential, not ontological terms. As such, the absolute for Mannheim is always and can only be somewhere in the future. It is precisely such a condition which Hegel described as the "unhappy consciousness" in the Phenomenology. It posits a "bad infinity" eternally separate and opposed to the self-consciousness achieved in the finite world which therefore always remains in a state of self-alienation. Hegel goes on to assert that he has overcome the unhappy consciousness by virtue of his reconciliation of the temporal and eternal. For Mannheim however, there can be no such reconciliation for he asserted as an historicist that there can be no transcendence of the finite existential basis of theoretical thought and, as a Hegelian, that such an absolute and eternal realm of reason would eventually be revealed in

the historical process.

In this chapter, the contradiction which exists in Mannheim's early efforts to establish evaluative historical knowledge and, derivatively, an evaluative sociology of knowledge has been discussed. It has been established that exploring the consequences of this contradiction are sufficient to refute this effort. Perhaps Mannheim came to a similar conclusion, for after conceding that the doctrine could not overcome "the antimonies inherent in it [by means of] a mere structural analysis" (1952c:179), it is never again discussed in similar terms. If this line of thought was merely an early and abandoned experiment, then this entire part of the thesis would be completely academic, perhaps in an unpleasant sense of that term. However, in the central work, Ideology and Utopia, the evaluative programme remains and there it either explicitly rests on an attenuated and much weaker version of this experiment or perhaps even on the implicit suppostion that the experiment was a success and needs only to be filled out by indicating the social basis of its achievement (i.e. the unattached intelligensia). For this reason it was necessary to devote a significant effort to understand why the programme expounded in these early works is untenable.

Part Two is concerned with the evaluative sociology of knowledge as it finds expression in Ideology and Utopia and in contemporary work in the discipline. The analysis will then, in Part Three, concentrate on providing an account of how the sociology of knowledge can thrive on relativist suppositions.

Notes to Chapter IV

1. Kettler (1967) discusses Mannheim's thinking on the issue of relativism as it appears in three still unpublished essays. Apparently he was in these years (1918-1922) resolutely opposed to the doctrine and was concerned to find a more direct solution than the sort of solution he eventually arrived at via the sociology of knowledge. Mannheim does assert in "Soul and Culture" that "our world view is characterized by an idealism which strives toward metaphysics" (Kettler, 1967:410).

2. Even a casual acquaintance with Mannheim's rather heroic, if ultimately unconvincing, efforts in this regard suffices to show how superficial Braybrook (1967:127) is in dismissing Mannheim with the charge that relativistic "doubts which assume away every means of clearing them up are as perfectly gratuitous as they are perfectly insoluble."

3. On the debate concerning simplicity as a criterion of theory choice, see Hesse (1974:223-258). She writes (1974:223) that "the notion of simplicity of theories is frequently invoked by both scientists and philosophers as a major criterion of theory choice. Yet ... the concept ... seems peculiarly resistant to application."

4. It was remarked in Chapter I that most writers have been content to list the sources of Mannheim's intellectual influences without attempting to understand their contradictory ramifications in his thought. However a number of other commentators have argued, in a way similar to that in the text, that Mannheim's Hegelian influence is incongruous with other aspects of his work. To my knowledge, however, there is no extended treatment of just why this is the case. Lichtheim (1965:192) notes that Mannheim does employ "language which makes sense only on

the (Hegelian) supposition that the Whole determines its parts." He goes on to charge that "on the assumptions made by Mannheim qua sociologist, there is no good reason why he should casually invoke the totality of history when it suits him." However, the strict demarcation of social science and philosophical analysis, which, of course, presupposes much of positivist thinking, is a boundary which Lichtheim, as inferred from many other comments in his essay, does not support and it is clearly not a criterion which is a fair one to impose on Mannheim. More importantly, Mannheim's 'invocation' of Hegelian categories would have appeared to Lichtheim to be far less "casual" if he had troubled to read Mannheim's early essays (which are not cited or referred to by Lichtheim). For, as noted in Chapter I, Mannheim's implicit reliance on Hegelian categories in Ideology and Utopia relates to his elaborate justificaiton of his use of these categories in these earlier essays. Wagner (1952:307) also is unhappy with Mannheim for "falling back on ontological assertions ... derived essentially from Hegel's conception of history." Here again the vagueness in the charge of 'falling back' can be traced to the fact that this writer is not familiar with these essays. Aron (1957:56, 57), who has read these essays, still is vague in charging Mannheim with "particular naivete" for mixing Hegelian and historicist elements. In contrast, I have attempted to show how Mannheim's own justification for this move is faulty and could not have succeeded. That Mannheim was aware of at least some of the difficulties involved in his position and that he attempted to justify what he took to be a legitimate adaptation of Hegelian insight warrants that we at least judge his efforts as something more than mere naivete. Indeed, if Mannheim had been correct in his charge that Hegel had been entirely

inattentive to historical and empirical reality in his documentation of the Absolute, then Mannheim's efforts to duplicate the Hegelian odyssey would have had at least some programmatic cogency. However, because of all that stands behind Hegelian philosophy but which drops away from historicist thought — the ontological dualism, the heritage of Christian faith, the confidence in philosophical speculation as the master discipline superceeding but containing every empirical discipline — Mannheim's effort to appropriate its outward form and intended results within an historicist world view could only produce an unconvincing and empty caricature of that philosophy. Writers associated with the Frankfurt school were also unhappy with Mannheim's Hegelian background and as far as I can presently discern from a secondary account (Jay, 1974), their criticism is similar to that presented here. However, if Horkheimer did in fact charge Mannheim with "an underlying acceptance of the classical German Idealist notion of a transcendent subject capable of a harmonious, all-embracing view of the whole" (Jay, 1974:31), then there may be reason to take issue with the Frankfurt critique. The interpretation offered here is that Mannheim, in accord with his historicist standpoint, consistently rejected any notion of a transcendent subject but still thought, incorrectly, that a total synthesis or viewpoint could be achieved. Further, Mannheim seemed always to insist that close, or even epistemically necessary, connections needed to be maintained between the social knowledge and the socio-historical practice of the intellectural elite. In this regard, he surely has a close affinity with the critical theorists — an affinity which was perhaps masked for the latter because of Mannheim's profound challenge to Marxism.

PART TWO

THE EVALUATIVE SOCIOLOGY OF KNOWLEDGE

CHAPTER V

EPISTEMOLOGICAL AGNOSTICISM

Introduction

Considered in Part Two are claims made by numerous writers that the sociology of knowledge can be epistemically evaluative. To claim this status for the discipline is to assert that it can or should judge the truth producing potential of knowledge communities or assign truth values to the knowledge claims made by such communities. The evaluative claim is most frequently made in terms of the first and more general procedure. Once the truth producing potential of a social context is known, the status of the knowledge claims made by such communities could be assessed. This seems so with the significant exception of Mannheim who circumscribed the possibility of the first procedure but attempted to carry through the second more specific programme.

The three chapters of Part Two will take the form of a brief explication of the ways in which sociological writers have supposed that the evaluative sociology of knowledge could be accomplished. Each position will then be followed by a critique which is intended to establish that the position in question is incorrect by virtue of internal inconsistencies or is unsatisfactory because of the severe difficulties involved in actually implementing the proposed programme.

Given the theme of Part Two, the material discussed in this chapter may at first appear incongruous. This discussion deals with a position which denies that the sociology of knowledge can be

legitimately evaluative but does not deny in general that inter-perspectival epistemic evaluations can be made. However, those who argue for this position generally assert that epistemologists are the only specialists able to accomplish such evaluative tasks. Although the chief interest of Part Two is the evaluative sociology of knowledge, this position seems to share, in an inverse way, many of the epistemic assumptions of those who have argued that the evaluative stance is appropriate for sociologists. Also it is perhaps the position which is defended more often than the evaluative one.

The Agnostic Sociology of Knowledge

This position asserts that there can be correct epistemic judgements made from the standpoint of a given knowledge community as to the truth and falsity of knowledge claims made by members of all other knowledge communities. This is an agnostic position simply because it is claimed that sociologists, at least in their functioning as sociologists, are not capable of making such judgements. Those who can accomplish this are philosophers or, more specifically, epistemologists. This view therefore presupposes a rather strict division of intellectual labour between these two disciplines and it has been upheld by members of both.

The agnostic version of the evaluative programme was originally put forward as part of the uproar which greeted the publication of Mannheim's Ideology and Utopia in English translation. After more than forty years, it seems hardly necessary to review in detail the particulars of this debate which are already quite familiar.[1] What most writers stressed was that questions of validity are of a different

logical order than contingent questions of the relationship between knowledge claims and social factors. Philosophers are to direct their attention to concerns of the former type while sociologists study contingent matters of fact. This distinction also entails that there can be no influence of sociological findings on issues related to standards of validity which exist regardless of whether any particular group in fact adheres to them. This position has therefore developed the familiar claim that the sociology of knowledge has no epistemological consequences.

It is important to establish that this position has been strongly adhered to in the years since its first articulation. Bottomore (1956:56, 57), for example, writes that epistemic distinctions such as true and false "are for philosophers, not sociologists to make." The sociology of knowledge accepts for study "any product of reflective thought" which its producers claim as true without concern as to whether it is really true. Berger and Luckmann (1967:13) also seem to support this view by asserting that "to include epistemological questions ... in the sociology of knowledge is somehwat like trying to push the bus in which one is riding." Rather, "the philosopher" is given the task of differentiating "between valid and invalid assertions about the world" (1967:2). As such, epistemic "questions are not themselves part of the empirical discipline of sociology" (1967:13). Recently, Barber (1975) has forcefully restated this view. He asserts (1975:104) that philosophy is a "necessarily separate discipline" from the sociology of knowledge both because of the difficult nature of the problems involved and because of philosophy's historical claim to the exclusive treatment of such problems. He therefore goes on to recommend a

cheerful agnosticism (or what he calls a "position of pragmatism") in which the sociology of knowledge:

> assumes and then takes for granted that the social world can be known, and can be known to a desired degree of objectivity, validity, and usability by scholars conforming to scientific standards and methods that have produced such knowledge about the physical and biological aspects of the world. Such a philosophical position is obviously a prerequisite to the sociological enterprise (1975:105).

Philosophers have often delegated this agnostic role to the sociologist. Hinshaw (1948:5) argues that "there is no epistemological branch of the sociology of knowledge" and that "the sphere of competence of sociology of knowledge is that of a science, not of an epistemology." He supports his distinction with the claim that "the sociologist of knowledge ... can be properly concerned only with what is believed in, what is held or thought to be true" (1948:7) while "problems about the nature, definition and applications of the terms 'factually true' and 'logically true' belong rightly to the epistemologist" (1948:9). Hinshaw claims that this strict demarcation of functions is necessary, for in these matters the scientist must be "dogmatic". Apparently this dogma concerning matters of truth and verification is to be handed down ex cathedra to the scientist: "Otherwise, how would the sociologist of knowledge ever know that (say) the thought of a given culture was ideological in nature" (1948:10).

Coombs (1967) argues in a similar manner for the logical priority of epistemology but his reasons are more explicit. The subject matter of epistemology which includes questions concerning the formal relations among propositions and the relationship of propositions to facts employs a distinct methodology which produces claims not verifiable by the methods of science. Coombs' assumption is that

epistemology accomplishes a rational reconstruction of sense experience or sense data into propositions and thereby determines the necessary and sufficient evidence for any proposition to be meaningful or true. These efforts constitute the foundations of all sciences and therefore prescribe the methodological rules by which science proceeds. Therefore "insofar as a sociologist dabbles in logic and semantics he ceases to be scientist and becomes epistemologist" (1967:232). Criteria of validity are therefore not the concern of the sociologist who "by studying the genesis of an idea ... is able to ascertain why a specific ideologist was socially enabled to develop an idea that was valid or else was socially restricted from developing an idea that was valid" (1967:233). This might be translated as saying that the sociologist of knowledge should be concerned primarily with the conditions under which social actors will agree or disagree with professional epistemologists. Coombs' position also illustrates the close relationship of the agnostic stance with the evaluative stance. On agnostic presuppositions however, sociologists may legitimately have evaluative intentions only derivatively under the guidance of the epistemologist.

The view of epistemology as a logically distinct and foundational discipline is lucidly defended by Ayer (1956) whose remarks can serve as a summary. Ayer claims that philosophy is uniquely distinguished by its methods. Its problems "cannot be settled by experiment, since the way in which they are answered itself determines how the result of the experiment is to be interpreted" (1956:7). Thus when discussing Gestalt psychology's objections to the sensory atomism implicit in sense datum theories, he claims "psychology cannot be used to refute them for the philosopher's concept of sense data is intended to be so

general that everything that the psychologist may discover about the machinery of perception is describable by its means" (1956:109). Transposing this objection into a sociological context, advocates of this view conclude that the presumption made by sociologists that they are more competent to adjudicate claims concerning social knowledge involves them in a circular fallacy. This occurs because epistemology must sneak back in ahead of such claims in order to make them intelligible and in order to claim warrant for the assertion of such sociological judgements as true.

It has been shown that those philosophers and sociologists who have argued for an agnostic stance for the sociology of knowledge contend that sociological researchers must avoid all judgements which involve epistemic terms or content. More precisely, this argument is intended to establish that insofar as even such basic terms such as 'knowledge' and 'evidence' enter into sociological descriptions, the sociologist must appeal to the philosopher to either certify that such descriptions are correctly used or accept the redescription offered by the philosopher. Yet stating the agnostic position in this way points out the very curious status which it assigns in perpetuity to the discipline. If the sociology of knowledge is under the very strict tutelage of philosophy, then the latter's task is quite literally to tell the sociologist what he is studying. One evident reason why this position is odd is that, if the common notion that scientific disciplines gain maturity to the extent to which they are independent of philosophy is affirmed, then the sociology of knowledge is, in principle, incapable of becoming a mature discipline.

Apart from this paradoxical result, the agnostic position can be

attacked in two ways. The first has to do with the limitations which it sets on appropriate research questions for the discipline. The second questions the cogency of the epistemological programme which it presupposes. Clearly the second criticism is the crucial one. For if the epistemology which backs up the agnostic stance remains intact, the proscriptions on research interests which are entailed by that epistemology retain their force. Yet if sociologists feel sufficiently constrained by these restrictions, they might be more receptive to an epistemology which removes them. The suggestion to be made here which will be argued in more detail in Part Three is that such an epistemology does exist. Further, if the philosophical Zeitgeist is a legitimate source of confidence, then there is some significance in noting that this epistemology is becoming increasingly prevalent among philosophers.

The research programme of the agnostic sociology of knowledge is circumscribed and thus weakened by unwarranted assumptions concerning the nature of epistemology. Given this criticism, it might seem paradoxical to point out that this version of the discipline does contain an important insight which is denied by proponents of the evaluative sociology of knowledge. This has to do with the unwillingness of agnostic writers to bring into the context of discovery questions of epistemic standards. In other words, questions of truth, validity and objectivity are excluded from the scope of research interests. As might be anticipated, a non-evaluative sociology of knowledge would also entail a similar bracketing procedure in the context of discovery.

Proponents of the agnostic stance make a crucial mistake in their assumption that there is or can be a single set of epistemic

criteria or, equivalently, that the set of such criteria agreed on by the community of professional philosophers is the only correct and only possible foundation of scientific knowledge. By construing the justification of valid knowledge in this restrictive way, they have then gone on to argue that the study of the construction of this apparatus of justification is barred from the purview of sociological research. This view of epistemology involves the idea that epistemic standards are constructed in a way which involves only sense or observational data unproblematically given to the individual knower. It is therefore assumed that epistemic standards can be understood apart from social and intersubjective factors. For this reason it is said to be unnecessary and indeed illicit to study sociologically the origin and use of epistemic criteria. As was noted, in some versions of the agnostic stance the study of distortions of objectively based criteria is permissible but these epistemic assumptions remain intact since such "distortions" are often held to be related to the introduction of social factors into the process of validating knowledge.

By adopting this view of epistemology, these writers have drawn the consistent conclusion that the research interests of the sociology of knowledge cannot include terms and phenomenon studied by philosophers. A proponent of the agnostic stance, Barber (1975), provides a bibliography which illustrates this conclusion. At the end of his essay he has included, by his own admission (1975:114), an advocatory bibliography which indicates the kind of research he feels is especially suited to this account of the discipline. With some exceptions, the cited works concern the social, as distinct from cognitive, organization of knowledge communities, the relation between intellectuals and general society,

and the delivery of communications and education. These are certainly legitimate research concerns for the discipline but if the sociology of knowledge is to be a sub-discipline sui generis of sociology with its own subject matter and indigenous range of empirical concerns it would have to include more than the residual problems of other sociological specialties. For example, what is to distinguish a purely organizational study of a community of scientists from similar military, medical or bureaucratic organizational studies? Or, similarly, what is to distinguish the economic functionings of academic communities from other communities which do not primarily engage in intellectual production? If integrated sociological theory is a desideratum, then it would be important to establish structural similarities of the type implied by this type of empirical concern. However, the sort of problems which would establish the sociology of knowledge as an independent sub-discipline are those related to the cognitive and epistemic structure of knowledge communities. More specific details of such a programme are to be considered in Part Three, but certainly one of the chief interests in this regard would be how such communities constitute epistemic criteria and, subsequently, how knowledge claims are negotiated as to their truth value. In contrast to this however, proponents of the agnostic position are committed to the assumption that insofar as such epsitemic criteria are objective, there can be no constitutive link between social factors and knoweldge. It is therefore illicit, or at the very least redundant, to study sociologically how epistemic rules are constituted and also, more interestingly, the possible range and variety of such rules.

Law and French (1974) have argued this point in a similar

fashion with regard to the sociological study of scientific knowledge. They claim that the "normative" sociology of science has implicitly adopted a philosophy of science which views the cognitive and hence social norms of science as static and pre-established by the immutable epistemic requirements of the subject matter. Allegiance to such a view of science has, they contend, masked a whole range of questions concerning how such normative scientific frameworks are established, maintained and circumvented and thus how scientific action is constituted. By adopting a philosophy of science in the Kuhnian mode, the "interpretive" sociology of science takes up problems which the authors claim are of more interest to a vigorous sociological study of science.

The point that is argued here is the generalized version of this complaint that certain philosophical predilections have restricted the purview of the sociology of knowledge so as to deny the empirical study of problems which can be of fundamental importance. In order for this complaint to be effective, it must next be considered whether such philosophically induced scruples are necessary or even plausible.

It is clear that the epistemology upon which proponents of the agnostic sociology of knowledge have based their version of the discipline is a rather antideluvian philosophy of science; that is, traditional empiricism before the deluge of criticism to which this view has been subjected. The epistemology of empiricism claims that all knowledge and therefore all of science is based on incorrigible foundations which can be found in some form of immediately given observational evidence. It is considered the task of the epistemologist to accomplish this goal. By studying the nature of perception and

observational evidence and by providing translation techniques for reducing the practical language of the working scientist to a language of observation terms, the epistemologist sought to establish the foundations and criteria for any existing or newly developed cognitive product which aspired toward a designation as knowledge. It should thus be clear why epistemology is considered by proponents of the agnostic stance to be a necessarily separate and non-scientific discipline and why any reliance on scientific method or findings is viciously circular. If the epistemologist's task is to establish the foundations of science in the way briefly outlined, he certainly would defeat his purpose by importing scientific results during this process which is logically prior to science.

This account is of course highly schematic but it is these essential features, most recently revived in this century by Carnap and the Vienna circle and their ideal of a 'logical construction of the world', which has motivated the view that the sociology of knowledge has no legitimate interests in epistemological matters and involves itself in a vicious regress by doing so. It can now be shown, however, in light of the philosophical critique of empiricism that this programme is untenable and that, consequently, the demarcation of science and epistemology cannot be construed in such a strict manner.[2]

The first impediment that arose for those who attempted to base science and epistemology solely on immediate experience and logic was that scientific laws and even predictions about single occurences became inexpressible. This because no amount of observational evidence is sufficient to ground universal statements or statements which make

reference to an unobserved future. Hence all scientific laws and predictions gain no certainty by any attempted reconstruction in this way. However, after proponents of this epistemology realized this, there did remain a rationale for rational reconstruction. This was the goal of eliminating by means of translation all statements with physical and theoretical terms into statements couched only in terms of sense data and logic. While not rigourously establishing the truth of scientific statements, this programme was attempted so as to clarify and formalize the link between observational evidence and scientific discourse. This would be achieved if it were shown that theoretical terms and terms which referred to physcial objects which were thought to be epistemically problematic could, in principle, be eliminated from science in favour of strings of sense data terms and logical terms. But Quine (1969:76-80) has documented how this effort gradually came to be viewed by its proponents as impossible as it was attempted in successively weaker forms which would not have eliminated theoretical terms but only have shown some of their observational implications. Quine attributes this failure to the realization that statements about physical objects have no set of observational implications which are independent from other theoretical and conceptual presuppositions. In other words, there is no independent observation language from which physical and theoretical terms can be constructed in a building block fashion. Hesse (1974:58), who concurs with this argument, concludes that "the programme of building the world from a minimum of primary immediately accessible components has proved notably unsuccessful, and must be regarded as misconceived."

Quine (1969) has reasoned that this lesson shows that there is

no longer any reason to treat epistemology as logically distinct from empirical science. That is, once the hope of basing all science on sense data has been given up, worries about the circularity involved in learning about science by means of science no longer have force. Quine (1969:75) observes that if the hope of a rational reconstruction has been given up, then the best alternative is simply to study "how this construction of reality really proceeds by settling for psychology." He continues:

> If all we hope for is a reconstruction that links science to experience in explicit ways short of translation [i.e. elimination of object and theoretical terms] then it would seem more sensible to settle for psychology. Better to learn how science is in fact developed and learned than to fabricate a fictious structure to a similar effect (1969:78).

What Quine has in mind here is the psychological study of perception and associated cognitive processes: "Epistemology ... falls into place as a chapter of psychology." Or, more modestly, "... epistemology merges with psychology" (1969:82, 90).

Once the view of epistemology as a search for incorrigible foundations is dropped, there is no reason why sociological as well as psychological understanding could not contribute to what Quine calls a "naturalistic epistemology". This sort of epistemology and the role it potentially provides for sociological understanding will gradually become more focused as the present work progresses. It will suffice to set the stage for a gradual refinement of the argument if two of the most prevalent themes of this epistemology are introduced here. These are the notion of intersubjectivity and the pragmatic component in epistemological justification.

If sociologists decide to accept the philosophical critique

of traditional empiricism, they stand to gain a rich cluster of research problems yielded by the need to understand the role of intersubjectivity which is accorded an important status by the epistemology which replaces the older empiricism. Empiricism's view of the isolated observer constructing concepts by incremental operations on discrete bits of sense data is rejected by this epistemology in favour of the view that perception itself is concept dependent. In other words, concepts, or conceptual predispositions, are said to precede perception. Further, concepts can only be learned in a social setting which is to say that their use to bring order to the barrage of sensory experience is only possible by means of shared criteria of application. It is the existence of shared criteria, and hence intersubjectivity, which provides sense for the notions of correct and incorrect language and concept use. In short, concepts and a conceptual structure are not given by immediate experience to individual or isolated knowers. They can be learned, applied in observation or theoretical statements, and modified only within a social collectivity or, equivalently, only intersubjectively. This concept could be and to some extent has been of great interest in understanding how knowledge communities constitute and are constituted by particular configurations of concepts and epistemic criteria.[3]

Post-empiricist epistemology can therefore be understood as an attempt to reformualte the relation between concepts and hence language and experience. Concepts and the theoretical and observation terms which they yield in conjunction with sensory experience are no longer understood as applied to that experience and hence the world in a discrete or isolated fashion. In short, there is a strong element

of coherence in this epistemology. Once the idea that observation terms are learned and incorrigibly applied by attending to the stream of sensory experience is given up, observation terms are then understood as being applied only in association with other terms — both observation and theoretical — which provide their criteria of application. Thus the proper application of any observation or theoretical assertion cannot be determined in isolation from the rest of the set of concepts and laws which constitute bodies of knowledge. In Quine's extreme holism this coherence condition is asserted as the conclusion that "our statements about the external world face the tribunal of sense experience not individually but only as a corporate body" (1953:41).

The coherence condition of this epistemology entails that the justificaiton of hypotheses and even the justificaiton of descriptive terms is importantly related to the discretion and, ultimately, interests of knowledge communities. Metaphorically, if language meets the world in complex ways, then the constraints the world sets on the truth values of individual components of that complex will not be entirely decisive with regard to the justification of knowledge claims. In short, given disconfirming evidence for any hypothesis, there is as Quine remarks "much latitude of choice as to what statements to reevaluate in the light of any single contrary experience" (1953:42).

The methodological directive which can be gained for the sociology of knowledge from this epistemology is that there may be a plurality of conceptual structures and rules of justification that, with internally justified warrant, can be applied to a common world. Moreover, these concepts and rules of justification are established and

maintained in a way which reveals the discretion of human knowers. Post-empiricist epistemology implies that such might or could be the case. An interesting sociology of knowledge would describe and understand this phenomenon as it occurs among knowledge communities.

This chapter can be concluded by noting how this result dissolves the perennial difficulty of the relation between the sociology of knowledge and epistemology. It dissolves because it only remains troublesome if the assumption continues that the two disciplines are separated by a logical barrier. Differences may well remain between the two disciplines but they are differences of method or aim. Indeed there could or should be mutual enrichment of the two but this presents no threat of circularity or self-refutation to either.[4]

Notes to Chapter V

1. Lavine (1944) provides probably the most systematic appraisal of the participants and their positions in this debate.

2. Contemporary critiques of traditional empiricism are, of course, innumerable. (An accessible overview of this debate is provided by Morick (1972).) I follow, in large part, the argument of Quine (1969) for two reasons. First, it is directed specifically to the empiricism of logical positivism which stands behind much of the thinking in both the agnostic and the evaluative sociology of knowledge to be discussed in Chapter VI. Second, as will be discussed in the text, Quine draws extremely pertinent conclusions for the relation of science and epistemology.

3. The notion of intersubjectivity is a somewhat more precise way of capturing the insight that knowledge is intrinsically social. This is the sense in which the epistemology underlying a non-evaluative epistemology fulfills the need for what some earlier writers called somewhat vaguely a "social theory of the mind" (e.g. Child, 1941; reprinted, 1973). Thus Mills (1963:425) wrote "what is needed is a concept of mind which incorporates social processes as intrinsic to mental operations." Berger (1973) discusses this sort of theory as it is worked out in the thought of Mead and Schutz. However, Berger still maintains that "within the sociology of knowledge, it is possible to bracket the final epistemological questions." Yet in tying knowledge so closely to social processes it becomes questionable in just what sense epistemology deals with "final" questions. Especially so where 'finality' offers the goal of 'correcting' the social

constitution of knowledge. Also it is curious in this regard to note that the fruitfulness of the concept of intersubjectivity is perhaps best shown in Berger and Luckmann's work (1967). Their strict demarcation of sociology and epistemology therefore becomes incongruous since intersubjectivity in traditional empiricism as well as Husserlian phenomenology to which these authors would presumably appeal is considered as an incidental or derivative byproduct of the knowledge of isolated knowers.

4. That there is a relation of mutual complementarity between science and epistemology is best voiced by Hesse (1976:202) who writes that "lurking within many of these elements of the new empiricism is a systematic conflation of certain aspects of the epistemological problem with causal mechanisms." Law (1975) has quite correctly pointed out that there are disparate interests as well, chiefly those having to do with epistemology's inherently normative character. However, establishing that such distinctions exist does very little to support his suggestion that difficulties which epistemology faces in this endeavor impugn its status as a plausible discipline.

CHAPTER VI

THE SCIENTISTIC SOCIOLOGY OF KNOWLEDGE

In opposition to those who are willing to accept an agnostic metatheoretical position for the sociology of knowledge, there is a prominent school which claims that it is within the scope and capability of the discipline to be epistemically evaluative. In general, those who have argued for this position have claimed that sociologists of knowledge possess, a neutral method for achieving universally or objectively valid knowledge about social reality. This method makes possible the descriptive (or, more ambitiously, explanatory) and comparative study of the social basis and conditions which are either conducive or inhibitive of the establishment of knowledge communities which are in possession of this method.

The sociology of knowledge can therefore evaluate the cognitive claims of disparate knowledge communities by reference to this method and the criterial knowledge which it produces. In this way, sociologists can come to conclusions based on their empirical investigations about the social conditions which are conducive to the production of true or objective knowledge. It is in this sense that the content of sociological conclusions of this sort would be epistemically evaluative. These projected evaluations are, of course, understood non-relativistically. That is, their existence is to be understood as not being essentially tied to any extant knowledge community. This characteristic of the evaluative programme is clearly stated by a recent advocate of the position. Urry (1973:472), in an essay critical of the relativistic implications of a Kuhnian inspired sociology of knowledge, upholds the view that "what the sociology of knowledge should be able to show is

why certain criteria operative within particular worlds ... are universal and true and why the criteria within other worlds are 'context-dependent'." This would allow sociologists, he continues, to assess whether groups who "believe that they know the truth" do so in fact.

The intention embodied in the evaluative position can be considered as derivative from a classical aim of the sociology of knowledge. Because, as Mannheim originally argued in Ideology and Utopia, epistemology failed to recognized the intrinsically social character of knowledge, a sociology of knowledge was to be expected to assume the traditional normative aims of epistemology.[1] Fuse (1967) succinctly projects the normative character which the classical or evaluative programme assumes. He writes (1967:249) that the "task of the sociology of knowledge ... is to devise some effective criteria by which to judge and ascertain which knowledge or which idea is more accurate than other alternatives of thought."

The sociology of knowledge is therefore expected to result in empirical and theoretical conclusions which, as Ryan (1970:226) has it, will provide an "account of how as a matter of fact the social, economic and eventually political circumstances in which we live make it harder or easier for us to discover the truth about social life." As will be further documented below, the evaluative or normative character of the sociology of knowledge continues to receive the support of a large number of sociologists working within the discipline. Stolzman and Gamburg (1975) have substantiated this perception. They observe (1975:95) that sociologists of knowledge "have been primarily concerned to demonstrate that certain social conditions are more conducive than others to the introduction of errors, distortion and obfuscation in

human thought."

Despite the frequency with which the evaluative sociology of knowledge has been espoused it is difficult to locate any sustained defense of the position. The justifications that have been offered have generally been based on some version of scientism.[2] Scientism can be understood, following Habermas (1971:4), as "science's belief in itself" not as "one form of possible knowledge" but as the sole equivalent of any possible knowledge. The link between scientism and the evaluative position can be tied quite closely. If sociology is a science and if what is rather indiscrimately referred to as the scientific method is the only or at least the best means to produce knowledge, then it follows that the sociology of knowledge can be evaluative in sense presently under consideration.

Scientism in this sense has often been relied upon in statements of the evaluative position. Horowitz (1961) has argued for the evaluative sociology of knowledge in the most unequivocally scientistic manner. "The sociology of knowledge has as a fundamental orientation the discovery of both the social roots of error and of truth, fact and opinion." This is in large part possible because sociology "requires no metaphysical superstructure." Rather, "the object under study largely determines the mechanics of exploration" (1961:64). Further warrant for this position is claimed by Horowitz in the assertion that the sociology of knowledge "does not rest on the standpoint of a moral or political credo as such." Therefore, by virtue of its "empirical foundations" the discipline is "distinct from ideology" (1961:27). Even philosophical presuppositions are avoided as possible distorting factors: "the sociology of knowledge necessarily employs a method

common to all science, and is thus distinct from philosophical methods." It follows that the discipline is "logically superior to the philosophical perspectives developed in the quest for knowledge" (1961:52).

This last statement constitutes the paradigmatic articulation of the sociology of knowledge as an independently evaluative discipline. Recall that in Chapter V, some writers, although they advocated an agnostic position, conceded that the sociologist could have derivatively evaluative interests by virtue of their acceptance of an epistemological method which insured objective knowledge. However Horowitz has severed this link by claiming that social science is yet more objective than philosophical inquiry.[3]

Parsons (1970:292) has also offered an implicitly scientistic but more cautious defense of the evaluative position based on "universal criterial or empirical validity." In this way, a distinction between ideological distortion of reality "which by social-scientific methods can be shown to be positively in error" (1970:294) and social science which operates with "methodological criteria for objective empirical knowledge" (1970:302) justifies what is here called, but not explicitly by Parsons, an evaluative sociology of knowledge. It should be noted, however, that Parsons is cautious to the extent that he refers to an "ideal-type" of social science which may in fact be distorted by certain ideological "strains" (1970:295, 297).

Spier, in an early work apparently in response to Mannheim, anticipates this justification for the evaluative sociology of knowledge by claiming that theoretical reasoning, which presumedly includes science, is free from the distorting influence of social and moral interests. "The aim" he writes "of theoretical reasoning is not success

in public but simply truth." It is therefore "absurd to say that the truth of any scientific statement is socially determined (1970:275, 276). This line of thought is also followed by Stark who asserts that social structure has "no ... influence on the content of science." On this basis he claims that "we can exclude all scientific knowledge properly so called from the realm of possible relativity" (1958:176, 167).

The scientistic background of the evaluative position is also reflected in the invidious dichotomy of science and ideology. If the sociology of knowledge is a science where this term is understood as referring to a method of inquiry free of the bias and distortion of ideology, then it is said to follow that the discipline can discover the social conditions of the epistemological factors which account for the distinction between science and ideology. This reasoning achieves an almost axiomatic status for Horowitz (1961:64) who equates the sociological study of science with the investigation of "the social conditions which allow for the 'productions of truths' " and, conversely, the sociological study of political and economic history with the investigation of "the sources of ideological distortion."

Finally, it is well known that philosophers in the Popperian tradition have been critical of relativistic sociological approaches to knowledge. Although Popper and his followers might be interpreted as being opposed to any form of the sociology of knowledge, Law (1975: 321) has argued that their primary objections are motivated by their contention that the discipline has not developed along strong evaluative lines. Given the remarks above, this perception by the Popperians is questionable but it might be accounted for by Popper's concentration on Mannheim and the more recent debate with Kuhn. In any case, they

have criticized sociologists for failing to observe putative criteria of demarcation between science and non-science and for their failure to account for the growth of knowledge. From these assumptions, Jarvie (1972:137) has urged sociologists to observe the "distinction between certain knowledge (current science) and mere delusive opinion (anything else)." Science is said to achieve this position by virtue of its methods which "do not themselves incorporate or favour any particular symbolic universe." It can therefore be suggested that Popper would welcome some form of the evaluative sociology of knowledge.

It should be clear that numerous social scientists and some philosophers from a fairly wide variety of perspectives have advocated if not actually attempted to implement an evaluative sociology of knowledge. Given this diversity of perspectives, the task of criticizing this position is a good deal less manageable than criticizing the agnostic position. This latter position seems clearly to presuppose a traditional empiricist epistemology, elements of which have generally been seen to be untenable. More precisely, untenable at least to the extent that it can no longer support the exclusion of scientific inquiry into epistemological matters. As has been implicitly shown, the evaluative position draws extreme conclusions from this result by claiming that sociological research can assume more or less unproblematically the traditional goals of the epistemological enterprise. This conclusion is best expressed in the goal of the evaluative programme: the discovery of the social basis of truth and falsehood. The argument below is intended to establish that this goal conceals an essential incoherence which threatens the very notion of an evaluative sociology of knowledge.

This argument requires two premises. The first is an essential

motivation for the evaluative programme and the other is a condition for the possibility of the programme. As such, any proponent of the evaluative sociology of knowledge is committed to these two premises.

First, some degree of epistemic conflict must be assumed. That is, there must be a plurality of knowledge communities which produce mutually contradictory knowledge claims concerning a common subject domain. This currently seems to be the case within the social sciences and historically is the case within natural science. As such, the assumption seems to be empirically plausible. Also, as Mannheim originally observed, when social actors are confronted by this sort of epistemic conflict they are motivated to study the social basis of the competing knowledge communities. It is this motivation as well as the additional one of coming to evaluative conclusions concerning the social basis of knowledge which animate the evaluative sociology of knowledge.

Second, the evaluating community would have to assume that at least one, or more likely, a set of these communities had developed a body of true knowledge. This need not be equivalent to assuming that this knowledge is absolute in the sense of being complete or entirely true. Rather it would indicate that this set of knowledge communities had developed a method which, in contrast to the method of competing communities, had been most successful in producing true knowledge and which had thus yielded knowledge with the greatest truth content. Again, this is an assumption which the evaluator needs to make. Denying the assumption is equivalent to affirming some radical form of skepticism or a mitigated form of skepticism, namely relativism. Clearly, neither of these two alternatives is compatible with the evaluative programme.

The argument against the evaluative programme will take the form of reconstructing the manner in which it would be or has been pursued. Essentially, the evaluating community would need to designate at least one body of knowledge as true in the sense sketched in the second assumption above. The vague term 'designate' is chosen here because, although this process harbours difficult problems in itself, it is not directly related to the crucial difficulty which the argument is designed to uncover. As such, the process of designation can be taken as accomplished. The evaluating community would then study the social basis of the set of communities which had produced that knowledge. This, in rough outline, would constitute the evaluative sociology of knowledge. The second aspect of the process would be the description and explanation and hence the discovery of the social basis of truth. The converse process, that is, the sociological study of the social basis of the communities not designated as having produced true knowledge would be the discovery of the social basis of falsehood.

In this reconstruction of the evaluative programme, the two stages do not necessarily represent a temporal sequence. However they do represent two distinct processes. That is, the evaluative characterization of the social basis of knowledge communities could only be accomplished by reference to whether the community in question produces true knowledge. And this judgement could only be accomplished by having a prior and distinct standard of true knowledge. But this is merely an abstract way of expressing the differences between relativistic and evaluative sociologies of knowledge. Thus in the relativistic programme no distinct standard is involved in the context of discovery since judgements by reference to external epistemological

standards are not included in the empirical problems of the relativist programme. The knowledge which is included in this external standard in use in the evaluative programme can therefore be termed the truth criterial knowledge. It is criterial in the sense that it is the means by which conclusions regarding the social basis of truth and falsehood are reached.

The crucial incoherence of the evaluative sociology of knowledge is preceisely that the evaluator's knowledge would necessarily have to be included within the truth criterial knowledge. This is clearly demonstrated by acknowledging the logical fact that it would be contradictory for the evaluator to claim that he had discovered that the social basis of his knowledge community was conducive to the production of falsehood. Such a knowledge claim would be self-refuting. To assert a knowledge claim is to assert it as true. Further, it is a tenet of the evaluative sociology of knowledge that the social basis of one who asserts a knowledge claim is causally or otherwise related to the truth or falsity of that knowledge claim. Therefore, a knowledge claim which asserted that the social basis of the individual who asserts it is related to the production of falsehood would refute itself. In short, it is not possible for the evaluator to discover that his own social basis is a social basis of falsehood.

This observation is sufficient to show that the evaluative sociology of knowledge, understood as the attempt to discover the social basis of truth and falsehood, is incoherent. It is so simply because it does not pose a legitimate empirical problem. If a community of scientists sets out to discover whether something is the case, say 'p', it must be logically possible that either 'p' or 'not-p' is the case. In

other words, the proposed content of discovery must be a contingent fact. But the argument above has shown that the evaluator, as a matter of logical necessity, must include his own knowledge in the set of truth criterial knowledge and hence must designate his own social basis as productive of truths about social reality.

It follows from this that the sociological evaluator cannot discover the social basis of falsehood. This because all bodies of knowledge which produced assertions contradictory to or inconsistent with the body of criterial knowledge would, of necessity, be judged as falsehoods. This body of knowledge is equivalent to the set of assertions which disagree with the assertions produced by the evaluator.

The evaluative sociology of knowledge intends to discover the social basis of truth and falsehood. However, it has been shown that the evaluator cannot discover that his social basis is conducive to the production of falsehood. Hence he cannot discover that it is conducive to truths about social reality. Likewise, he cannot discover that the social basis of knowledge communities which have produced assertions contradictory to or inconsistent with his own are conducive to the productions of truths about social reality. Hence he cannot discover that they are conducive to the productions of falsehoods. The projected results of the evaluative programme in the sociology of knowledge cannot, in principle, be accomplished. The evaluative programme therefore reduces to the categorization of competing claims of social knowledge as views with which the evaluative inquirers agree or disagree.

In order to block this reduction, that is, in order for the evaluator to be able to say that his knowledge claims and those other claims included with the truth criterial knowledge are 'really true',

he would have to justify his designation of criterial knowledge by reference to some epistemological criteria which are sui generis or foundational or are otherwise secured before the process of discovery commences. This would then be equivalent to a reliance on a form of the agnostic programme in which some group of inquirers are elected to discern fundamental criteria which would justify a body of criterial knowledge as true. This would allow the evaluative programme to proceed on a stronger basis than the mere categorization of competing claims as to agreement or disagreement with the evaluator. However, to concede the necessity for such a reliance would involve abandoning the central intention of the evaluative programme which is the discovery of such standards by empirical investigation of the social basis which produces them. As such, it seems clear that this move would be a substantial concession for the evaluative programme. For it is precisely their claim that the sociology of knowledge as an empirical science can achieve an independent and a more adequate understanding of knowledge than philosophical inquiry and can therefore assume the traditional normative or foundational status of that discipline.

This argument against the evaluative sociology of knowledge can be strengthened by showing how proponents of the programme are committed to the reconstruction of the evaluative research process offered above. They have almost uniformally asserted that the social basis of the production of true knowledge can be discovered. Horowitz (1961:64) is clearly the most unequivocal in this assertion for he says that the task of the sociology of knowledge is "the discovery of both the social roots of error and of truth." Ryan (1970:226) makes nearly the same assertion by asking the discipline for an "account of how as a matter

of fact the social ... circumstances in which we live make it harder or easier for us to discover the truth about social life." The argument here is that we could only "discover" that our particular method of inquiry makes it easier for us and those who agree with us to find the truth about social life. Similarly, if the sociologist of knowledge, following Stolzman and Gamburg (1975:95) wish to "demonstrate that certain social conditions are more conducive than others to the introduction of errors ... in human thought" they would end up "demonstrating" that the social conditions which characterize the knowledge communities which produce knowledge not in agreement with that of the evaluative sociologist are conducive to the introduction of errors in this way.

This argument may not directly threaten the other writers who have suggested an evaluative programme. This is because it is not clear whether they are actually closer to an agnostic programme in which the standards for designating the criterial knowledge are established by some group who achieve epistemological results which are logically prior to sociological investigation. Parsons (1970:302), for example, contends that the sociologist can identify ideological distortion by virtue of his scientific status which includes "methodological criteria for objective empirical knowledge." However, it is likely that he would contend that these criteria have been certified by a prior form of epistemological inquiry. This supports the contention that the 'strong' evaluative programme of Horowitz must collapse into a form of the agnostic sociology of knowledge. Again, this is a result that sociologists who have reasoned like Horowitz will find unpleasant. Even though an agnostic programme could be established which was not committed to an untenable form of empiricism, carrying out an evaluative sociology of

knowledge from this basis would still place the discipline under the very direct tutelage of another discipline from which, in the conventional wisdom, it needs to separate itself in order to begin to achieve scientific maturity.[4]

This argument is highly abstract in the sense that it relies upon a compressed and highly schematized reconstruction of the evaluative research programme. In order to supplement the rejection of the evaluative sociology of knowledge, two empirical studies which have evaluative intentions are discussed below. This discussion is designed to show the unsatisfactory manner in which the researcher has in each case designated or assumed criterial knowledge and, conversely, how simple it is to suggest alternative sources of criterial knowledge which overturn the researcher's evaluative conclusions. Also, in anticipation of the relativist programme, it can be shown how this need to assume criterial knowledge obfuscates significant issues and phenomena which could be considered by sociologists.

The first study considered is by Remmling et. al. (1973) and is concerned with knowledge of the social class structure of Ecuador. The authors' evaluative intentions are declared in the title; this is to be a "study of the ideological distortion of social reality." The main point in contention is the relation between racial and politico-economic stratification in this country, the population of which includes nearly an equal admixture of indigenous and European racial elements. Remmling shows that in this rigidly and oppressively stratified society, there is a value attached to being of European heritage. Remmling further, but rather cursorily, shows that the upper classes typically identify class structure as being co-terminous with racial background.

Hence, the middle and upper classes make every effort to identify themselves as being of European heritage and culture.

However it seems that since nineteenth century colonial times there has been extensive inter-marriage to the extent that presently, in the urban population at least, no genetically unintegrated groups remain. Therefore, even though the middle and upper class members, in genetic terms, have significant native heritage they still attempt to identify with a European heritage. At this point the sociologist of knowledge enters with the conceptual sibbolith of "false consciousness". The social knowledge of the upper and middle classes is said not to be "reality adequate" (1973:393) supposedly on the basis of their failure to recognize the genetic amalgamation of all class groups. What Remmling has therefore shown is that middle and upper class Ecuadorians, although they often share a genetic background with the subjugated lower classes, identify with European culture and life styles and, in so doing, legitimize their superior social position.

The European identification of the upper classes is claimed by Remmling to be mythical or otherwise incorrect. It can "easily be debunked by the fact that nearly all Ecuadorians regardless of their social status display an admixture of Indian physical characteristics" (1973:292). But is this debunking really quite this easy? It appears so only because Remmling has included as an aspect of his criterial knowledge a decision on how to use the concepts of genetic and socio-cultural identification. This decision appears to be one of linking these two concepts such that socio-cultural identification must be applied only in terms of genetic identification. However, it is entirely plausible to suggest that the conceptual framework which stands behind

the social knowledge and meanings used by the upper classes does not recognize this linkage. If this is so, then it would clearly not be contradictory for an upper class Ecuadorian to assent to both the proposition that he has native ancestors and to the proposition that he is a European. The set of meanings which are associated with concepts and actions having to do with a European form of life may relate to social status and achievement and may not be genetically ascribed. However, Remmling has, without even discussing what conceptual meanings are in use, reasoned that since upper class members either assent to both propositions or appear to deny the former that they are engaging in blatant contradiction and therefore have a false consciousness. The upper classes, in other words, have failed to meet the epistemic requirements "demanded by the reality principle" (1973:393).

Although notions such as the "reality principle" sound impressive they actually function to designate Remmling's criterial knowledge which itself appears to buttress his own policy and value alternatives for Ecuadorian society. He suggests social policy proposals for Ecuadorian society which would promote economic and political egalitarianism. While Remmling may well be justified in protesting what seems to be a rather brutal set of social arrangements, it is not at all clear that he can legitimately use these evaluative sociological and epistemological categories in such a cavalier fashion.

It is clear that Remmling has been at least premature in his application of these evaluative categories. For he has addressed no inquiry into the matter of what conceptual meanings with regard to genetic and cultural heritage are actually in use. If, as suggested, the upper classes stress cultural heritage as the basis of class consciousness,

then Remmling's evaluative conclusions strike wide of their target. For the cognitive inconsistencies which he identifies are dissolved by this possible conceptual alignment. The identification of conceptual disparity serves to illustrate how the evaluative programme reduces to the categorization of bodies of knowledge as to those with which the evaluator agrees or disagrees. Remmling rejects the conceptual network which the upper classes may have erected around the notion of European heritage and emphasizes the common genetic heritage which all Ecuadorians presently share. But in the absence of some further justification which would secure the universal and neutral validity of his own concept use, Remmling cannot block this reduction.

In order to show that the meaning of social heritage which the Ecuadorian upper classes may employ is an entirely plausible one and to show how Remmling has cloaked his own moral and political programmes with the armament of the evaluative sociology of knowledge, it would be sufficient to point to a group where the link between genetic and cultural heritage was legitimately severed. Consider the body of knowledge and its conceptual framework developed by blacks in the United States during the 1960s. For this group, there was nearly three centuries of racial inter-breeding so that, as in Ecuador, blacks did not represent an unintegrated genetic group. However, as blacks begin to stress as valuable their cultural and racial heritage, it became quite common for even those blacks who were light skinned and had Caucasian facial features to assume, by virtue of socio-cultural but not genetic meanings, a black identity. If Remmling claims in his study of Ecuadorian society to be in possession of neutral and universal standards of rationality and correct concept use he would, of necessity, be

constrained to charge blacks who thought and acted in this way with failing to meet the epistemic requirements "demanded by the reality principle." Hence, by failure to observe the facts of genetics, both the Ecuadorian upper classes and American blacks assume a false consciousness.

This case poses extreme difficulties for Remmling. If he assents to this consistent extension of his criterial knowledge in sociological research and the policy proposals which issue from it, he would need to contend that the reality principle upholds the liberal programme of black cultural amalgamation through integration with whites. However, if he balks at such an extension, the status of his criterial knowledge in use in the Ecuadorian study would be threatened. Remmling's evaluative conclusions with regard to upper class Ecuadorian knowledge communities could be overturned if it could be shown that upper class Ecuadorians had established, like U.S. blacks, a certain aspect of their conceptual framework in accordance with their interests and not in accordance with Remmling's conceptual framework. It is highly significant that there is this kind of uncertainty in regarding Remmling's results. Do the Ecuadorians engage in blatant and collective forms of self-deception, or is their concept use simply different than that which Remmling assumes in his criterial knowledge? That this fundamental matter of empirical description remains unanswered shows quite clearly how the evaluative sociology of knowledge can often neglect or even deny the existence of significant empirical issues in sociological research. Until these issues are dealt with, all that Remmling can mean when he charges the Ecuadorian upper classes with having a false consciousness is that they have ideas and rule society in ways with which he disagrees.

The second evaluative study to be considered is a book by Crane, Invisible Colleges (1972). This is the more interesting of the two since it is a carefully conceived and executed study and, as a result, the defects which can be related to its evaluative intentions are far more subtle than is the case for the research cited above. The objective which can be raised concerning Crane's research has to do with her concern with the "growth of scientific knowledge."

Crane (1973:20) is concerned with understanding the implications that the social organization of scientists has for the "growth of knowledge in scientific research areas." The more specific concern is with a form of hierarchical organization among scientists working on highly delimited research problems which generates what she terms "invisible colleges". Crane's (1973:34) chief conclusion is that "growth of a research area reflects a social interaction process in which contact between scientists contributes to the cumulative growth of knowledge." The main index for growth of knowledge is the number of research pieces and their pattern of production which are related to the few central and innovative pieces of research which originally initiated the research area. As such, Crane's work is an extension to small research areas which are subsumed under larger scientific disciplines of Kuhn's conception of science in which paradigms and their development have a central role in the cognitive structure of science.

Further details of her empirical findings are not germane to the conception of the growth of scientific knowledge. What is of interest is the glaringly insufficient treatment given to this central conception. For Crane, the dynamics of the growth of invisible colleges, measured in part by the number of research articles generated during the periods

of normal science which this social organization makes possible, is equated in an overly simplistic fashion with the cumulative growth of scientific knowledge. However, the nature of the cognitive growth of science is surely a more problematic concept than this 'operationalized' treatment allows for. For example, it is well known that Popperian philosophers abhor normal science which is concerned to extend in a merely additive fashion the results of a theoretical development rather than to subject such theoretical conjectures to empirical observations in a way designed to maximize the chances of their falsification.

In addition to the Popperian tradition, the problem of scientific growth has and continues to generate an immense philosophical literature. A fundamental problem revealed by Crane's focus on single research areas concerns precisely in what way she is claiming to assess cumulative growth of knowledge. Without considering the disciplines and the larger paradigms within which these research areas are embedded, it is impossible to establish to what extent findings produced in these areas are cumulative in any way except as they are internally related to that area. That is, the number of inter-related findings within a single area may allow one to say that that area has grown in a merely additive sense isolated from the overall cognitive development of the discipline. However, cumulative growth in a strong, ontological sense implies that the succession of research areas are related in a certain way. In order to claim that there is cumulative growth in this strong sense, it would have to be established that the encompassing paradigms within which research areas are embedded also show cumulative growth. This condition would be established only if it could be shown that the replacement of one paradigm by another allowed for the explanation of everything

explained by the predecessor as well as additional findings (Laudan, 1976:585). One of the necessary conditions for this is that all of the problems which the preceeding theory solved must be able to be formulated with the succeeding theory. Whether these conditions obtain, that is whether scientific knowledge is cumulative in this sense has of course been questioned by numerous philosophers. Kuhn (1970:268), for example, claims to have shown that "new paradigms seldom or never possess all the problem solving capabilities of the predecessors." By focusing on isolated research areas, Crane is not even in the position to begin to assess whether the cognitive products which they produce are cumulative in the sense in which she implies rather than in the uninteresting way which can be assessed only within the limited scope of those research areas.

The problems which ensue from Crane's evaluative intentions can become more clear if her procedures are related to the schematized reconstruction of the evaluative research programme outlined above. What she has done is designated as a criterion of cognitive growth one form of research production. She then claims that she can show, as a result of sociological investigation, what forms of social organization are conducive to the growth of knowledge in terms of how well they approximate the designated criterion. But this procedure is neither philosophically or sociologically satisfactory. First, the criterion of growth of knowledge is apparently achieved only by an ad hoc operationalization of the inherently vague notion of scientific growth. As such it is a mere designation of criterial knowledge and, as suggested, is highly problematic philosophically. Also, as was the case in Remmling's research, this procedure obfuscates phenomena that should be important

to sociologists of knowledge.

Kuhn (1970b:239) has written that "whatever scientific progress may be, we must account for it by examining the nature of the scientific group, discovering what it values, what it tolerates and what it disdains." Crane's approach to scientific progress is to designate its criterion and then discover from this basis what scientific groups are successful in promoting the growth of knowledge. The careful descriptive procedure suggested by Kuhn is thus subjugated to evaluative intentions.

There occurs in Crane's work a revealing passage (1973:54, 55) in which she is discussing the failure of an invisible college to form in the area of small groups research. She then cites a review article written from a normative perspective by authors who chastize their colleagues for their unorganized theoretical and methodological pluralism. Crane (1973:54) contends that this is "tentative evidence that the absence of an effective invisible college linking groups of collaborators can inhibit the development of a field." However, given the complexity of the notion of cognitive development, all she is entitled to assert from this article in question is that at least some working scientists in this area (that is, the authors of the article) adhere to her account of scientific growth and are willing to assume the role of moral entrepeneurs when they observe that their colleagues fail to adhere to that account.

There are certainly conflicting positions on this issue which, if they are in force in the community in question, would dissolve Crane's evaluative conclusions in a way similar to the dissolution of Remmling's conclusions. For Feyerabend's "anarchic theory of knowledge", such conceptual and theoretical pluralism is quite compatible and, indeed,

conducive to the growth of scientific knowledge. More plausible, is that small group researchers hold to a kind of undisciplined inductivism in which it is asserted that sets of apparently unrelated laws and concepts are eventually integrated under higher level laws and theoretical concepts. They are thus shown to be instances of these higher level laws and their initially haphazard development is thus vindicated. Whatever the case might be, Crane is not in a position to affirm or eliminate these possibilities for she instead treats a normative work of participants in a dispute within a knowledge community as if it confirmed an evaluative standard applicable to all communities. In a non-evaluative sociological approach, such an article would be treated as evidence of possible epistemic conflict and not a confirmation of a simplistic evaluative notion.

That such obvious empirical possibilities are not even considered can be traced to the evaluative intentions of Crane's research which neglects the complexities and possible conflicting standards of the concept of scientific growth as it is used by various knowledge communities. Confronted with such complex and unaccounted for possibilities, Crane's evaluative research reduces to a categorization of those scientific communities which implement a criterion which she holds and those which appear not to do so.

This chapter has attempted to document that the evaluative sociology of knowledge proposed from a non-Marxist basis is unsatisfying and ultimately impossible. It is impossible in the sense that its primary task — the discovery of the social basis of truth and falsehood — does not pose an empirical issue. As such, the sociology of knowledge <u>per se</u> cannot be epistemically evaluative. This logical impossibility

is also reflected in the manner in which evaluative intentions actually obstruct the introduction of interesting empirical issues which research within the discipline should clearly deal with. This has been demonstrated above with the issue of whether different conceptual structures are in use or whether conflicting epistemological notions are involved when knowledge communities clash and disagree.

By way of conclusion, a similar result from a different perspective can be cited. Merleau-Ponty has written that if the epistemologist is denied the role of the ultimate and absolute epistemic arbitrator, the social scientist is not thereby entitled to claim this role. He continues (1963:500):

> The same historical dependence that prohibits the philosopher from claiming an immediate access to the universal or the eternal prohibits the sociologist from substituting himself for the philosopher in this function and from giving the scientific objectification of the social the value of an ontology ... simple to transfer to science the grand-mastery refused to systematic philosophy ... is out of the question.

Notes to Chapter VI

1. Elias (1971) has recently restated this classical position by (a) asserting that philosophical approaches to knowledge are inadequate because of their alleged exclusion of social and historical factors (1971:362f) and (b) by urging that the empirical results of the sociology of knowledge should include judgements as to the "object-adequateness" and "object-relatedness" of the bodies of knowledge under investigation (1971:364, 365).

2. It is appropriate to note here that I exclude from explicit discussion in this chapter the Marxist tradition in the sociology of knowledge. This tradition has, of course, claimed to provide an evaluative sociology of knowledge par excellance — the asserted ability to judge the functioning and products of knowledge communities in an epistemically definitive and absolute manner. But its philosophical foundations and substantive manifestations are so diverse and complex that the argument to be offered in refutation of a more strictly positivistic or scientistic evaluation programme would not constitute an adequate response to this tradition. However, insofar as Marxism incorporates positivist content in the form of "scientific socialism", the argument in the text might also be transferred, with suitable modifications, to Marxist versions of the evaluative programme without loss of force.

Against the more refined or less scientistic forms of Marxism, there are different lines of attack which can only be suggested here by means of two questions. The evaluative programme of the Marxian sociology of knowledge, especially as advanced by Lukacs (1971), essentially stands on the putatively universal status of the proletariat class. The ground of revolutionary emancipation as well as valid and complete

knowledge is to be located, Marx writes, in the proletariat who constitute a "sphere of society having a universal character ... that cannot emancipate itself without emancipating itself from all the other spheres of society, thereby emancipating them" (1967:263). Marxist writers have claimed that the universal status of this class would also guarantee that social knowledge constructed from the proletariat perspective is universally valid by virtue of a lack of particular interests which distort bourgeois knowledge. It is of course indisputable that the proletariat's interests and attendant world view will result in distinct intellectual products but to argue that these are universal interests where this property entails a privileged epistemic position, is an entirely different matter. Also, Marxists have been inattentive to a possible source of this hypothesis relating to the universal nature of the proletariat class. One could begin to critize this notion by investigating Marx's ambiguous relationship with Hegel in a way analogous to Part One where Mannheim was criticized for importing incongruous elements from Hegelian philosophy. What implication would there be for the hypothesis if it could be shown, as Averneri (1967) has claimed to have done, that the notion of the universal proletariat class was transformed in largely speculative fashion from Hegel's reasoning that the Prussian bureaucracy was a universal class in virtue of its lack of merely particular social interests? A second and related claim that has been based on the universal character of the proletariat by writers such as Marcuse (1960:291) is that only within a classless communist society initiated by the proletariat revolution will valid and complete scientific knowledge of society be possible. However, to anticipate the argument concerning a relativist concept of objectivity in Part Three, what would account for

the rather obvious prediction that within a classless society there would be no 'propaganda', 'ideology' or 'distortion' of knowledge? Would the communist revolution initiate an epocal opening of the horizon of epistemic purity, or would the classless society result in an unchallenged consensual objectivity which could easily be mistaken as an absolute ontological objectivity?

3. To some extent, the distinction employed here between the agnostic and evaluative programmes is an artificial one. It is so in the sense that some theorists wish to reach evaluative conclusions but look to philosophical inquiry for the standards which would support these conclusions. However, with regard to the issue of the causal explanation of beliefs, the distinction and hence demarcation between epistemology and the sociology of knowledge has been rigidly imposed. Dean (1978: 283), for example, shows how, on the basis of certain epistemological decisions which exclude the causal explanation of true beliefs, the sociology of knowledge is restricted to the study of error and false beliefs. Hence the discipline "becomes the sociology of error and nothing more." Hofmann (1976:242) also implements this rigid demarcation. On the basis of a set of assumptions regarding ideological or defective thinking (fehlerhaftes Denken) he restricts the purview of the discipline to this realm: "Dies ist eine Aufgabe nicht der Erkenntnistheorie, sondern der Soziologie." Conversely, epistemology is solely enabled to study the content and nature of science and scientific knowledge.

4. In Chapter V, Quine's notion of a naturalistic epistemology was discussed in order to support the contention that sociological investigations into traditionally epistemological issues are quite in order.

The reader may wonder, however, whether an implication of the present argument, namely that some epistemological results must be prior to empirical research, is inconsistent with or at least puts constraints on a Quinean motivated sociological research programme. However, there is really no difficulty here. Neither Quine nor those who promote a relativistic sociology of knowledge contend that epistemological inquiry, whether carried on by philosophers or indigenously by sociologists, is superfluous or impossible. Certain forms of this inquiry, in particular empiricist reductionism, are claimed to be sociologically inadequate. But the status of epistemology as a normative and speculative discipline which generates sociological research problems and which would be responsive to sociological results is left intact by Quine's naturalistic epistemology. In short, epistemology and the empirical sciences can, according to Quine (1969:83), co-exist and evolve in "reciprocal containment."

CHAPTER VII

THE SYNTHETIC SOCIOLOGY OF KNOWLEDGE

This version of the evaluative sociology of knowledge asserts that no single body of knowledge constructed by existentially bound knowledge communities has an exclusive epistemic priority with respect to the true account of the subject matter in concern. This state of affairs, in which there exists at any given time a multiplicity of true accounts of the subject matters, is said to support the effort of an evaluative sociology of knowledge to build from these partial perspectives a single body of knowledge which represents in its entirety the subject matter and thus provides a comprehensive and true account of reality.

The only sociologist who has attempted this programme in ernest is, of course, Mannheim. Given that the idea of a synthetic sociology of knowledge involves an assent to some form of relativism, it is not surprising that nearly all of the writers discussed above who advocate one of the other forms of the evaluative programme have denounced Mannheim's version of the programme, generally by way of rejecting the presupposition of relativism.

Because Mannheim is the most prominent representative of this view, the exposition and critique of the position will be nearly entirely concerned with his work. However, it should not be assumed that Mannheim is the only theorist to have advanced or at least implied the possibility of evaluation by means of synthesis. The implication is often present in the idiom of existentially bound social knowledge yielding only a partial vision of social reality (e.g. Sederberg, 1972:174). Stark (1958:91) at points seems to advocate a position that at least would be

amenable to synthetic sociological efforts. He asserts that although those from different social contexts may create disparate and conflicting knowledge, "the truth is one" and that these different versions of it are all "aspects of the truth which are all in themselves equally valid."

A recent sociological theorist who appears to engage in a synthetic approach in an evaluative way is Collins (1975). Although he is not specifically interested in the sociology of knowledge, his aim is probably in an unintended way very close to what Mannheim advocated.

Collins sets himself the ambitious task of establishing sociology as an explanatory science which potentially could approximate the theoretical power and integration of physical scientific explanation. In considering why this scientific status has not yet been achieved, he discusses the "deleterious effect of our overriding ideological concerns ... that have led us away from, rather than toward, a generalized explanatory science"(1975:20). Ideology is, he continues, both limited in its scope and by its value and practical implications. Therefore a prerequisite for a scientific sociology is a detachment from value judgements and a decision to choose "our concepts for their optimal explanatory adequacy rather than for their evaluative resonance" (1975: 23). This sort of prescription is, of course, not new but where Collins diverges from similar efforts and approaches the Mannheimian ideal is in his synthetic but selective amalgamation of various perspectives of the social world. He therefore rejects functionalism but accepts that this tradition does accurately reveal that there are some equilibrium and solidarity mechanisms in all societies; he primarily adopts the conflict perspective which, compared to functionalism, "is a good deal more successful at realistic and testable explanation"; yet "the conflict

tradition has ideological problems of its own" (1975:21, 22) and these are to be tempered by importing large doses of Weberian insights.

The parallel with Mannheim's synthetic approach should be clear. However Collins' work illustrates an important distinction to which Mannheim was often inattentive. The distinction is between theoretical eclecticness and an evaluative synthesis. In the former, there is no intrinsic claim made to have transcended ideological particularity. However, an evaluative synthesis necessarily involves this idea in its claim to have developed a comprehensive and uniquely valid account of the subject matter. This distinction will be further discussed in the critique of Mannheim's evaluative sociology of knowledge.

When we last left Mannheim, he had expressed some consternation concerning the theoretical possibility of his adapted Hegelian effort to find a universal and absolute viewpoint emerging in history which could act as a criterion for constructing and judging socio-historical knowledge. As noted in Chapter IV, after expressing such doubt, Hegel's influence is no longer explicitly acknowledged. Mannheim's concern shifts entirely to the circumstances of contemporary thought and away from an encompassing historical perspective. For these reasons many of Mannheim's commentators have at least implicitly assumed by ignoring the earlier works that there is a theoretical break in Mannheim's thought which sanctions treating Ideology and Utopia as an isolated statement. This may also explain why critics have by and large attacked as implausible the idea of the unattached intelligensia as the bearers of the evaluative task. However, this kind of criticism fails to reach the heart of the issue which is precisely the Hegelian presupposition which establishes the goal which the unattached intelligensia is to achieve.

If it can be shown that this goal is itself problematic, the existence and status of the unattached intelligensia becomes mute.

The structure of the present chapter is therefore parallel to that of Chapter IV. It must first be shown that Ideology and Utopia (1936) incorporates historicist and Hegelian presuppositions and then criticism of Mannheim's synthetic sociology of knowledge can proceed by showing how these elements produce a contradiction within Mannheim's synthetic solution to relativism.

Mannheim is somewhat less explicit about his historicist commitments in Ideology and Utopia than in his earlier works where historicism receives an almost lyric endorsement. But it is clear that the historicist view of social knowledge constitutes the primary motivation and justification for the sociology of knowledge. "Because knowing is fundamentally collective knowing" Mannheim writes "it presupposes a community of knowing which grows primarily out of a community of experiencing prepared for in the subconscious" (1936:31). This historicist or, as Mannheim now says, this "sociological point of view regarding knowledge" is responsible for revealing "the irrational foundation of rational knowledge" (1936:31). Therefore, the historicist theory of knowledge is transformed somewhat in Ideology and Utopia in a way which emphasizes the more specifically sociological view that social and political factors, as opposed to the more vaguely defined anthropological factors in the earlier essays, are what directly influence intellectual products. In numerous and typical passages it is asserted that in social and political knowledge "actual differences in styles of thought ... the statement of the problem and the logical techniques involved vary with the political position of the observer" (1936:117).

Historicism therefore provides the basis of a research programme for Mannheim's sociology of knowledge. Hegelian presuppositions however provide the basis for an evaluative programme which Mannheim desires in order to mitigate the relativism inherent in historicism. However, with regard to this latter component, Mannheim is far less explicit than he is in his earlier essays. Nevertheless, Mannheim's Hegelian presuppositions can be documented in his central discussion in Ideology and Utopia of the emergence of the sociology of knowledge from the concept of ideology.

The origin of the sociology of knowledge can be located, according to Mannheim, at that point when the total conception of ideology is generalized. The total conception treats the whole of an adversary's thought as existentially bound to his social position so that conflicting points of view are no longer treated as conscious deceptions but as knowledge produced in association with varying interests and varying social backgrounds. Mannheim credits Marx with the discovery of this total conception but he takes the logical step of generalizing it so that it is no longer possible "to make one's own view appear infallible and absolute" (1936:78). Thus with the total and general view of ideology a shift is made from the theory of ideology to a non-evaluative sociology of knowledge in which there is no attempt made to "expose or unmask those views with which one is in disagreement" (1936:78).

At this point in the work, Mannheim takes up the issue of relativism which immediately confronts the non-evaluative approach. He realizes that this approach entails the need "to combine such a non-evaluative analysis with a definite epistemology" (1936:78). The epistemology adopted here is very close to that discussed in "Historicism".

Mannheim first posits a position of "relationism" according to which intellectual products can only be understood and have their validity assessed in relation to the standpoint and its associated meanings and interests from which it was produced. Relativism, he charges, clings to an outmoded conception of immutable and eternal standards of truth for socio-historical knowledge. It thus disparages the possibility of genuine knowledge once it is conceded that such standards, even if they exist, are unattainable by virtue of the social conditioning of knowledge. By rejecting this theory and the associated inference, relativism is surpassed by Mannheim's relational epistemology.[2]

This is the first step in the development of the new epistemology and it has a parallel in Mannheim's reasoning in "Historicism". In this essay, when discussing the same issue, Mannheim introduces the monistic Hegelian element of an absolute view of the entire historical process. This move is made after he asserts "that it is a question of life and death for historicism to be able to link the various epochs together in a meaningful evolutionary pattern" (1952b:107). In Ideology and Utopia essentially the same move is made but it is left unannounced. The reader can almost sense the same "life and death" question nagging at Mannheim as he propounds the non-evaluative approach which then creates a pressure to reintroduce the notion of a single truth after the same conception presupposed by relativism has been discarded. Mannheim responds to this pressure by asking "which social standpoint vis a vis history offers the best chance for reaching an optimum of truth?" (1936:80). Then there is a subtle shift in the non-evaluative programme from an isolated analysis of each socio-epistemological standpoint to a concern with their "approximate truth as it emerges in the course of historical

development out of the complex social process" (1936:84). Finally, it is asserted that "conflicting intellectual positions may actually come to supplement one another" so that "the theme of this non-evaluative study of ideology" becomes the relationship of all partial knowledge and its component elements to the "larger body of meaning and ultimately to the structure of historical reality" (1936:85, 86).

In this way, the non-evaluative approach shifts to what Mannheim calls "the evaluative conception of ideology". Mannheim realizes this when he asserts "that beginning with the non-evaluative conception of ideology ... we have been unwittingly led to an evaluative-epistemological, and finally an ontological-metaphysical approach" (1936:88). The text becomes somewhat obscure here but it appears that Mannheim fails to attribute the shift to the evaluative approach to the introduction of the presupposition of a monistic meaning in history and the possibility of its absolute knowledge to which all epochs and, now, all the discordant viewpoints within each epoch are treated as approximate realizations. Rather, he shows that the non-evaluative approach has become evaluative by virtue of its criticism, i.e. its evaluation, of the static absolute view which posits eternal standards in history. Thus "the non-evaluative, dynamic point of view inadvertantly becomes a weapon against a certain intellectual position" (1936:88). Later he characterizes this as an "invisible shift from the non-evaluative to the evaluative one" (1936:90).

While it may not be quite correct to call this shift invisible, it most certainly involves equivocation. This equivocation occurs with reference to two central concepts which are employed. In both cases, it is Mannheim's Hegelian presuppositions which, although they are never definitively asserted, allow him to embrace the more problematic meaning

of each of the concepts in questions without ever really supporting his choice.

The first equivocation centres round the notion of "evaluative". By merely asserting an intellectual position, in this case Mannheim's relationism, one necessarily, if only implicitly, evaluates other conflicting positions. This is to evaluate in a trivial sense and it is also the kind of evaluation in virtue of which Mannheim asserts that he has shifted to an evaluative conception of ideology. However this is only a verbal maneuver. The concept of evaluation is really used by Mannheim in a much stronger way to describe the assessment of each intellectual position and its corresponding social context in terms of the degree to which it is able to accurately know social reality or the true meaning of the movement of the historical situation. This second sense of evaluation therefore involves a reference to an independent standard, namely "the structure of historical reality" (1936:86) whereas evaluation in the first sense is only the implicit evaluation which is involved in the clash between discrete bodies of knowledge. Mannheim is never clear as to the warrant he has for shifting to the second sense of evaluation. The discussion below however is intended to establish that such a warrant can only be attained by virtue of his implicit Hegelian ontology.

The second, and more significant, equivocation concerns the notion of "comprehensiveness". The degree to which any given intellectual standpoint is comprehensive can be assessed in two ways. A position could be comprehensive if it attempted to assimilate changing historical conditions and the practical alternatives which they made possible; or if it had a revisable conceptual structure; or if it adopted,

according to its own epistemic rules, results and insights obtained from divergent intellectual positions. These procedures involve comprehensiveness in a way which can be assessed apart from any external ordering of the epistemic value of discrete bodies of knowledge. To be comprehensive in this way is to be eclectic.

However, it is clear that Mannheim intends to assess comprehensiveness in a very much different way. He begins discussing the concept in quite an uncommitted fashion. He notes that different and conflicting "systems of thought" can be "reduced to different modes of experiencing the 'same' reality" (1936:99). Our knowledge of this reality, he asserts, "will become more comprehensive ... as it assimilates more and more of these divergent perspectives" (1936:103). But shortly thereafter, the Hegelian interpretation of comprehensiveness as successive and more complete knowledge of a truth which is in some sense apart from mere historical participants is discretely asserted:

> For mastery of each historical situation, a certain structure of thought is required which will rise to the deamnds of the actual, real problems encountered, and is capable of integrating what is relevant in the various conflicting points of view. In this case, too, it is necessary to find a more fundamental axiomatic point of departure, a position from which it will be possible to synthesize the total situation. (1936:105).

On this basis Mannheim can conclude that "only when we are thoroughly aware of the limited scope of every point of view are we on the road to the sought-for comprehension of the whole" (1936:105).

On the first interpretation of comprehensiveness, one position could be said to be more comprehensive than another. Yet saying this would leave undetermined the matter of whether the more comprehensive view was also of greater epistemic value. Indeed, in a non-evaluative

sociology of knowledge, properly so called, that question would not even arise. However, by asserting that there is a truth, in this case about society, which can be known by means of, but in a way which supercedes, partial standpoints, Mannheim has clearly imported an Hegelian presupposition into the sociology of knowledge as it is set out in his central work, Ideology and Utopia.

After this point in the text, these presuppositions remain in force and are not further clarified or acknowledged. When explicitly setting out the task of an evaluative sociology of knowledge in the chapter entitled "Prospects of Scientific Politics", Mannheim asserts that all intellectual positions are limited by their conditioning factors and therefore are "inevitably partisan". "But this implies" he continues "the possibility of an integration of many mutually complementary points of view into a comprehensive whole" (1936:148, 149). Certainly it would be easy for a reader who had not identified the Hegelian background of Mannheim's position to wonder how this "implication" follows from intellectual conflict or even how competing and partisan views can be mutually complementary. It is only by reference to Mannheim's preceeding chapter and the background of his earlier work that the nature of the inferences which support his "scientific politics" becomes clear. Yet this clarification serves to illuminate the fund of Hegelian presuppositions which are preserved in Ideology and Utopia.

It has been established that, under the pressure to find a solution to the problems posed by relativism, Mannheim moves from the non-evaluative to the evaluative study of ideology. In this move however, he incorporates the Hegelian notion that reality, in particular socio-historical reality, constitutes a coherent totality which posits its

partial manifestations in the thoughts and actions of social participants. Because the reality of "the total social process" (1936:81) presents itself as a coherent totality, the sociologist is "capable of integrating what is relevant in the various conflicting points of view" (1936:105). This synthesis of the total situation would therefore accomplish the harmonization of diverse manifestations of the social totality which appear to historical participants to be irrevocably discordant.

Before discussing this Hegelian inspired synthesis of contemporary epistemic conflict, some attention must first be given to another manner in which Mannheim occasionally supports his synthetic view of intellectual diversity. This position draws on an analogy taken from the results of Husserl's phenomenology. In his analysis of the constitution of the objects of perception, Husserl realized that the immediate phenomenological data involved in the perception of spatially located objects contained only a small fraction of the object which is actually perceived in its fullness (i.e. seeing a house rather than a plane of bricks and windows). Perception therefore involves the immediately given sensation and a reference to other previous or potential acts of immediately given sensation. This not immediately given content of the perception Husserl calls the "internal horizon" of the act of perception (cf. Kockelmans, 1967:141-143).

Three or four times in the early essays and once in Ideology and Utopia (1936:301) Mannheim makes specific reference to what he calls this "discovery of Husserl's". He reasons that if immediate perception of spatial objects can only be partial and thus involve reference to other partial perspectives, then this condition, in an analogous way, would support the synthesis of socio-historical perspectives of an

encompassing social reality. He writes therefore:

> By analogy with the discovery of Husserl — that it is a characteristic of the spatial object that we can view it only in different 'profiles' (Abschattungen), i.e. from definite local positions and in definite perspectives — one could, it seems to us, venture the thesis that it is part of the essence of a historico-cultural, but also of a psychic object, that it is penetrable only in 'mental and psychic profiles', that is, by way of certain cross-sections and dimensions of depth the nature of which is dependent of the mental-psychic perspectivic location of the observing, interpreting subject (1936:105).

Using the same analogy in Ideology and Utopia he concludes that "objectivity is brought about by the translation of one perspective into the terms of another" (1936:301). But Mannheim is clearly unsatisfied with what he terms this merely "additive synthesis" (1952c:171). This is because he most likely, although he does not indicate it explicitly, read further in Husserl's work Ideas where this conception is developed. Husserl (1931:para.38) notes later in the text "how under certain circumstances the whole perception explodes, so to speak, and breaks up into 'conflicting apprehensions of the thing' ... how these suppositions annul one antoher, and in such annulling are modified in a peculiar way." Probably because this situation seemed far more likely in the social world, Mannheim never seriously entertains a mere compilation of divergent perspectives as would be adequate in the perception of physical objects but rather he is led to a synthetic position which involves the "selection and accentuation of certain aspects of historical totality." This leads him to a position in which he must show how it is possible to determine "which of all the ideas current are really valid in a given situation" (1936:94).[2]

In Part One it was shown that Mannheim's association of Hegelian presuppositions within an historicist view of social and cultural reality

issued in a contradiction between the eternal and dualistic prerequisites of the former view and the denial of these elements by the latter. It has been shown that Hegelian and historicism also co-exist in Ideology and Utopia. These two elements clearly result in the serious contradiction which was discussed in Chapter IV. This contradiction can be clearly identified by showing the confusion of two distinct and incompatible ontological theories in Ideology and Utopia. These two differ most significantly in terms of how epistemology is related to ontology.

The first ontological theory which Hegel and therefore Mannheim utilizes is one which postulates a reality which has intrinsic to it accessible characteristics which establish in terms external to finite knowers the conditions which must be satisfied in order for knowledge to be attained. This is the general theory which motivates Hegel's (although not only Hegel's) epistemology. He therefore establishes the ontological attributes of reality in the Logic and then in other works shows how historically occuring partial apprehensions of that reality cummulatively and progressively satisfy epistemic conditions which are established by the intrinsic and eternal ontological structure of reality. Hegel therefore claims to have demonstrated epistemically irreducible characteristics of reality which uniquely determine the necessary structure of absolute knowledge.

In order for the synthetic programme to be even conceptually possible, this sort of ontological conception must be presupposed. It is only by reference to the totality of ontological attributes of social reality that the evaluative sociologist could decide what results from divergent perspectives were "relevant", in Mannheim's word, to a total synthesis. That is, the total synthesis could not be secured if the

criterion of relevance were implemented in terms of the sociologist's particular interests.

It is this Hegelian inspired ontology that animates the evaluative aspect of Mannheim's sociology of knowledge. The position is suggested by repeated use of such phrases such as "historical totality", "total conception", and views of a "larger whole". Further, the only concept of socio-historical reality which could support a synthetic compilation of standpoints into a more comprehensive standpoint involves the supposition that each standpoint has satisfied or has achieved a sub-set of independently existing epistemic conditions determined by the ontological attributes of reality. This seems to be the conception behind characteristic passages such as:

> All points of view in politics are but partial points of view because historical totality is always too comprehensive to be grasped by any one of the individual points of view which emerge out of it. Since, however, all these points of view emerge out of the same social and historical current, and since their partiality exists in the matrix of an emerging whole, it is possible to see them in juxtaposition and their synthesis becomes a problem which must continually be reformulated and resolved (1936:151).

This passage is only intelligible against the background of an Hegelian ontology. Notice that "partial points of view" are said to "emerge out of ... the same social and historical current" or "historical totality" and that this relation of emergence is said to support a collective epistemological accessibility of that totality. In a neutral or epistemically indeterminate sense, partial points of view co-exist and as such respond to the same events and conditions. However, it is only by virtue of the Hegelian or idealistic identity thesis that Mannheim can suppose that, having emerged from social reality, these discordent views can collectively apprehend or know discrete yet compatible

attributes of that reality. It is also perhaps significant that Hegel, whose name appears only three or four times in this work, is mentioned soon after this passage as one who attempted to "synthesize in his own work the tendencies which hitherto had developed independently" (1936:151).

It is crucially important to realize, however, that this view of realtiy is incompatible with the ontology presupposed by historicism. In this view, the subjects of knowledge are not cut off or totally isolated from the object of knowledge. Yet the object of knowledge, or the world, underdetermines the content of knowledge. The world therefore is demoted, as it were, to, in Rorty's apt phrase (1972:663), "the purely vacuous notion of the ineffable cause of sense and goal of intellect." This is the ontological theory which issues from locating the source of primitive and significant epistemic content in the inter-play of the knower's environmental context and world view. In short and in Mannheim's words, "rational knowledge" has this "irrational foundation" and cannot therefore be accounted for by a transcendent structure of reason from which partial viewpoints emerge.

There is a subtle but incompatible dualism in Ideology and Utopia between reality as it exists in itself and reality as it exists for those whose viewpoint is partial. In other words, the multiplicity of discordant viewpoints, either emerges out of the historical totality and are therefore only apparently discordant or they emerge from the "life basis" (1952b:96) of conflicting social groups and are thus truely and irremidiably discordant. Mannheim cannot have it both ways. If the latter conception is correct, the solution which presupposes the former conception is impossible. Yet if the solution is possible then Mannheim must alter in significant ways the historicist foundation of the

sociology of knowledge.

This historicist foundation must be altered because an effective synthesis would contradict a basic premise of that foundation. If any group of knowers, in particular a group of Mannheimian sociologists, claimed to have isolated from the various perspectives of social knowledge those elements which were valid in terms of the epistemic and thus ontological structure of reality which is presupposed in the Hegelian view, then that collectivity would, of necessity, have to claim that their synthetic knowledge was no longer bound or in any way essentially related to their political interests and their social background. Therefore, at the completion of any valid synthesis, the result contradicts the presupposition which necessitated the programme in the first place. The presupposition namely, that participation in the social process "binds" one to "a partisan view" and insures that "his most general mode of thought, including even his categories, are bound up with general political and social undercurrents" (1936:116, 117). The only way in which Mannheim could resolve this inconsistency is to opt for a form of the scientistically motivated evaluative programme. Here it is claimed that every epistemic standpoint except that of the scientific analyst is distorted or limited by social and world view factors. Some commentators have read Mannheim in this way, in particular Popper (1962:216):

> Is it not ... to be expected, always assuming the truth of [the theory of total ideology] , that those who hold it will ... produce an amendment to the theory in order to establish the objectivity of their own views?

However it seems clear that Mannheim went to great length to avoid precisely this claim. His convoluted reasoning might be understood as an attempt to secure the results which the self-exemption from social

limitations on knowledge claims would achieve but without resorting to the blatant and unsatisfactory assertion which the self-exemption reasoning undeniably involves. But this attempt involves a very fundamental inconsistency and therefore fails. As such Mannheim is left with another version of an unhappy consciousness. That is, he has set himself a goal which is unattainable by virtue of other features of the system.

Again, as in "The problem of a sociology of knowledge" (1952c), Mannheim realizes that the envisioned goal is presently unobtainable. Therefore he concedes that he has advocated "a comprehensive view of that which is not yet synthesizable into a system" (1936:188). Although he does assert that there is a "certain progress" toward this "absolute synthesis" (1936:152) which is evidenced in the fact that each later synthesis incorporates "the results of those that have gone before." But if this argument is correct, even the possibility of an absolute synthesis cannot be allowed and hence the assertion that such "dynamic" syntheses constitute a hierarchical epistemic progression is confused. He therefore realizes that current syntheses would have to be "dynamic" and "reformulated from time to time" (1936:151). Mannheim seems to account for these difficulties in attaining the ultimate goal as practical difficulties. The argument here is that they are conceptual difficulties and, as such, they mask what can only be partisan structures of comprehensiveness as absolute but limited syntheses.

Another way of illustrating these conceptual difficulties is to investigate how they surface in Mannheim's equivocal treatment of the important notion of comprehensiveness. He writes that "we can no longer conceive of the partiality of a point of view as merely being a matter of degree." He continues that conflicting viewpoints are "based not only

on the selection of subject matter, but also on the divergence in ways of setting the problem, and finally in the divergence of categorical apparatus and principles of organization" (136:152). Simply put, any synthetic attempt will be intrinsically tied to the socio-epistemic standpoint of the analyst. Thus by being restrcited by explicit presuppositions from transcending social influences in intellectual constructions, the attempt to be comprehensive in the evaluative sense which Mannheim proposes reduces to being comprehensive in the neutral way in which knowledge and insights from various perspectives may be adopted and utilized in a modified manner by particular knowledge communities which consequently remain in their original state of epistemic and social conflict.

In this connection, it is instructive to note that Collins' attempt to be synthetic in a fashion close to the Mannheimian ideal has failed to satisfy at least one reviewer precisely because he failed to integrate into this synthesis those elements from a position which the reviewer felt were the most powerful and essential insights provided by that position. More specifically, Stolzman (1975:537) has charged that Collins has vitiated Marxism in his synthetic conflict approach by ignoring certain core economic tennants of that position. Furthermore, it is logically possible that any critic, depending on his social and intellectual interests could criticize Collins in a similar way with reference to any of the other viewpoints which he adopts in his comprehensive synthesis which he intends to be more valid than any single perspective.

Although Mannheim appears to realize this, his lengthy case study of five forms of political-historical thinking (1936:117-147) reflects

quite clearly the overly simple and rejected view that these different perspectives pick out discrete and true aspects of social reality which are then compatible in a synthetic and uniquely valid synthesis. It is evident, however, that there are in almost all societies in which there is even a minimal amount of conflict clear counter-examples to Mannheim's case study. A study of the Black Panther party in the U.S. between 1968 and 1978 would show that their political thought expanded from a rather narrow and polemic view which advocated political violence and revolutionary consciousness raising to a current view which sanctions party politics within existing political structures as well as capitalistic economic ventures in black communities. Has this more comprehensive view evolved in a way which would suggest the possibility of a synthetic view of radical left, liberal and laissez-faire modes of thought so as to provide a single system of knowledge removed from partisan distortion? Or, alternatively, have these elements been merely stategically adopted by a leftist party in a way which leaves largely unmodified their fundamental world view of revolutionary change and cultural nationalism? The case of the Black Panthers surely suggests the latter interpretation.[3]

A factor which negates the plausibility of this kind of inter-perspectival synthesis is that of meaning variance between competing world views. This concept has been developed by Feyerabend (1962:42-49) who argues that competing scientific theories can utilize the 'same' concept although the contextually defined meanings of that concept may vary markedly and incompatibly. This also restricts the comparison of and direct refutation of competing theories which claim to account for the same observational phenomena. Therefore, if it could be shown that the meanings of crucial social concepts vary in conflicting ways

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between various epistemic perspectives or world views, then the kind of translation of each perspective or world view into a single encompassing view of social reality which is envisioned in the synthetic programme would be, in principle, impossible. The extent to which this might be the case would involve detailed case studies and indeed would be a worthy set of empirical problems for a non-evaluative sociology of knowledge. In this connection for example, Gallie (1964) has identified an equivalent phenomenon which he calls "essentially contested concepts" and shows in this way that meaning variance holds for several crucial socio-historical concepts which include 'democracy', 'justice' as well as religious and aesthetic concepts. Mannheim himself, anticipates this view in "The problem of a sociology of knowledge" (1952:170, 171) when he notes how shifts of socio-cultural knowledge involve essential changes of meaning which make "an additive synthesis impossible." Also in Ideology and Utopia he observes that "diverse meanings can arise due to the divergent social origins of the different members of the whole society."

However, whether the proposed evaluation of social knowledge through synthesis of the range of contemporary epistemic standpoints is merely additive or is to proceed more selectively, the considerations presented here are intended to show that such a programme is, in principle, impossible and self-contradictory. While Mannheim recognizes some of the problems that are involved, he presents them as practical difficulties which will only impede progress toward what is variously called a fully comprehenisve principle or an absolute synthesis. It has been shown however, that Mannheim in Ideology and Utopia has retained presuppositions which are only intelligible in terms of an incompatible

amalgam of Hegelian idealism and historicism. This incorporation of historicism as the foundation of the sociology of knowledge and the retention of a Hegelian based solution to historicist relativism therefore results in a profound contradiction.

This part of the thesis has identified serious difficulties with three forms of the evaluative sociology of knowledge. It can be concluded that evaluative programmes which are supported by standards set by philosophical epistemology, or by scientistic confidence in the beliefs of a single knowledge community or by a Mannheimian synthetic approach are seriously deficient. Part Three argues that the sociology of knowledge should be largely non-evaluative and that the epistemological relativism which this approach entails is a feasible and strong foundation for the sociology of knowledge.

Notes to Chapter VII

1. Mannheim's assertion that relativism presupposes absolute and eternal standards of epistemological validity is clearly not accurate of all accounts of relativism. He may perhaps be taking this from Lukacs who writes that "it is only meaningful to speak of relativism where an 'absolute' is in some sense assumed" (1971:187). In any case, if this position is or was commonly associated with the doctrine of relativism, then Mannheim was correct to discard it. However, it is doubtful that his shift is anything more than a verbal one. That is, Mannheim's relationism seems clearly what is taken to be the doctrine of relativism — the contention that the content of knowledge and the epistemological standards which support it must be understood with reference to the group which produce them and, further that it may be illegitimate to impose external standards. As such, merely clarifying and improving the conception of relativism does not constitute, as Mannheim seems to have suggested, a "solution" to the problems posed by the doctrine. Renaming his version of the doctrine may or may not have been justified depending on one's view of terminological economy. But claiming that definitional work goes some way toward clearing up the primary problem of relativism namely, the way in which it challenges common epistemological intuitions, is unjustified.

2. It is important to distinguish the few instances of Mannheim's reliance on this Husserlian notion from the dialectical notion of synthesis which is primarily employed. Schmidt (1974:172), for example, has conflated these as a single "metaphor". The concept of metaphor involves the notion of a re-application of a concept in ways which significantly

restrict the literal application of the original concept. If the argument in the text is correct, it would follow that it is inappropriate to label the Hegelian inspired notion of the synthesis of perspectives in Mannheim's work as merely a metaphor.

3. For more on the recent political and epistemological comprehensiveness of the Black Panthers, see Frankel (1978). Huey Newton, the leader of the party, justifies the decision to include electoral participation by saying "I think we're a little more mature." However, he goes on to caution that "if your ideology is not well developed, then the electoral arena is very dangerous because you become too dependent upon it" (1978:8, 9). This I take to be a concrete expression of the notion that the decision to incorporate additional, formally disparate, elements within a particular knowledge or political community proceeds in accordance with the established epistemic and political conventions and framework of that community. Typically, in other words, comprehensiveness in the realm of social knowledge and practice cannot be understood to involve transcendent standards.

PART THREE

TOWARD A RELATIVIST SOCIOLOGY OF KNOWLEDGE

CHAPTER VIII

CONDITIONS FOR A RELATIVIST SOCIOLOGY OF KNOWLEDGE

Introduction

In the final part of the thesis, attention is directed to a broad range of philosophical and methodological issues which are involved in an attempt to understand a relativist sociology of knowledge. It seems that such a basis for the discipline is a current desideratum either implicitly or explicitly among many non-Marxist sociologists. Yet there has been no convincingly systematic or extensive effort to establish either a plausible philosophical or methodological groundwork for such an approach. Neither of these virtues can, in a strong sense, be claimed for the present work. However the remarks below establish, in outline form at least, that relativism is a coherent and insightful way of understanding and investigating knowledge and knowledge communities.

The intent of this chapter is to characterize some of the philosophical positions which are compatible with a relativist sociology of knowledge. The issue of relativism is an extremely complex one in the sense that it encompasses debates occurring in numerous and diverse areas of philosophical discourse including the philosophy of language, of science and of social science as well as the broader areas of epistemology, metaphysics and ethics. In addition, most of these debates are the locus of an immense amount of current philosophical work. Hence, very little can be offered by way of a philosophical defense of the positions staked out. It will be enough however, if these remarks raise

the level of the debate concerning relativism beyond some of the standard refutations which have been voiced for many years. This will be accomplished if it can be shown that the debate can be carried on within the parameters to be set out and not at the level of discourse that was originally initiated in opposition to Mannheim. One intention is therefore to show from the perspective of the broad philosophical positions which support relativism that challenges such as that relativism is self-refuting or empirically false carry no weight.

The concerns and the methodology of Part Three, like those of the previous two parts, are primarily philosophical. Two points can be made in order to justify this approach in a work which is undertaken in a sociological context and is intended for sociologists. The first is the perhaps circular claim that increasing numbers of sociologists have turned to philosophical analysis during the past two decades in order to come to some understanding of the perplexing issues which confront their discipline. Kuhn's (1970a:88) observation of science in crisis (which, in relation to sociologists, has been as much a description as a self-fulfilling prophecy) is that "in periods of acknowledged crisis ... scientists have turned to philosophical analysis as a device for unlocking the riddles of their field." The present work shares in this motivation and thus gains at least some justification from it.

Certainly the deeper question here is the value of philosophical analysis in understanding the nature and methodology of sociology. For it could be argued that such an approach is either too abstract or simplistic or otherwise obfuscates our understanding of social science. However, to be suspicious of or to deprecate philosophy of social science may well be an over-reaction to the position investigated in Chaper V

in which there was assumed by both philosophers and sociologists to be a rigid hierarchy between the two disciplines. If this assumption is rejected (and it was the conclusion of Chapter V that it should be) it does not follow that philosophical analysis is to be rejected as an unimportant component of sociological self-understanding. Its precise role is, admittedly, a complex issue. But Quine's (1969:83) notion that philosophy and empirical psychological science and, by extension social science, should stand in "reciprocal containment" provides a good sense of a proper and fruitful relationship between philosophy and sociology.

The specific intentions of this work have favoured the philosophical member of this relationship. However, aspects of the work have contained a strong intimation of the kind of reciprocity which can be achieved between philosophy and sociology. In Chapter VI, for example, a highly abstract argument was employed in order to point to serious difficulties in the scientistic reasoning which motivates some research in the evaluative sociology of knowledge. However, this argument is reinforced by applying it to two actual pieces of evaluative research. Moreover, in both of these case studies empirical counter-examples (U.S. blacks and experimental social psychologists) are raised and they are crucial in substantiating claims made in the abstract argument. In Chaper VII, an important part of the argument against Mannheim concerns the philosophical presuppositions which stand behind his central concept of "comprehensiveness". In addition to showing that his philosophical presuppositions are contradictory, an important part of the analysis was provided by suggesting that in two empirical cases, the reception of an intellectual work and the Black Panther Party, Mannheim's notion of

comprehensiveness was entirely inapplicable.

With a few exceptions, the philosophical remarks which follow are not supported by suggestions of empirical cases. An attempt has been made however, to indicate how the philosophical concepts which are explored could be supported by sociological evidence. A more mature or less programmatic work could therefore be extended by means of such evidence and case studies so as to approach more closely the ideal of a reciprocal containment of sociology and philosophy.

The Concept of Relativism

In this chapter an account of relativism is offered. A set of general philosophical positions which are compatible with relativism are outlined and then, from the perspective of these positions, various criticisms of relativism and two traditional problems in the sociology of knowledge — the problems of truth and of objectivity — are considered.

It may help clarify the intent of the chapter if the logic of an 'account' is briefly explicated. On the basis of some very general considerations concerning the nature of the epistemic enterprise, I hope to establish that the content of knowledge and the epistemic standards and goals which stand behind that content, are best explicable by understanding the structure and operation of the human groups which produce bodies of knowledge. In technical terms, the intent is to establish that the nature of epistemic operators such as reference, truth and assertion is best understood as involving concepts explicated by three term relations between cognitive claims, the world and the structure and content of knowledge communities. This contrasts with the traditional and non-relativist view which contends that such operators

are concepts involving only two terms — that is, a relation between statements or propositions and the world.[1] The account of relativism below is therefore intended to show that the introduction of the third term, the structure of the knowledge community, can result at this broad conceptual level in a coherent and insightful understanding of knowledge.

This conception of an account of relativism is significant for two reasons. First, as Mannheim pointed out, relativism has often been used to justify an evaluative sociology of knowledge. It was shown in Part Two how proponents of this position assert as a matter of fact that certain knowledge communities are deficient in that they are able to produce only knowledge which is relative to their values and interests. Relativism is said to be avoided by the community of the evaluator for reasons which I hope to have shown ill-conceived. However, the account of relativism offered below locates the source of the doctrine in humanly pervasive epistemic factors which are constitutive in some way of all knowledge. If this view is correct, the potentially evaluative community cannot resort to a convenient self-exemption from relativism in order to justify their attacks on other knowledge communities.

Also, being clear as to the intent of the following account of relativism shows how it is distinct from a "solution" to relativism. In a tradition perhaps initiated by Mannheim, sociological and philosophical writers who have confronted relativism have assumed that offering a solution is the correct response to the doctrine. Thus, in the face of empirical reports that within some realms knowers appear to make substantive contributions to the content of their knowledge, they have sought to find ways which would allow them, in effect, to eliminate the

third term in an understanding of knowledge. However, what follows is an account which could serve to sensitize sociological investigators as to ways in which this third term could be located in the content and structure of even highly 'theoretical' or 'rational' knowledge communities. In short, relativism provides an explanatory and conceptual framework for the understanding of both cognitive conflict and consensus. This account is secured by revising our conceptual understanding of the foundations of knowledge and knowledge communities.

The relativist thesis is not equivalent to a set of vague epigrams or simple conclusions such as that 'all knowledge is determined by interests' or 'rationality is context-dependent'. Rather, relativism should be considered not as a fixed conclusion but primarily as a methodological directive which provides a sense and a context for empirical research. Asserting arguments concerning the conceptual possibility of relativism does little to settle the issue of how relativism obtains as a condition of various sorts of knowledge. Indeed, if relativism is a coherent thesis, then establishing that it is would be the beginning of inquiry and hardly its terminus. It will therefore be enough if the comments below secure relativism as a coherent option. The next, and final, chapter will consider some issues concerning how relativism can be implemented in a research programme.

In the debate concerning relativism writers, both pro and con, rarely specify what they take relativism to mean. What follows is a brief but precise characterization of what relativism is here taken to mean and what it is not taken to mean.

Proceeding at a very abstract level, consider two knowledge structures P_1 and P_2. These can more concretely be understood as

paradigms, conceptual schemes, world views, etc. Consider further, two statements S_1 and S_2 which are asserted by proponents of P_1 and P_2 respectively. The relativist asserts that it is possible in those cases where S_1 and S_2 are the same statement or where S_2 is a translation of S_1 into P_2 and vice versa, that S_1 can be true in P_1 and S_2 can be false in P_2 or that S_1 can be false in P_1 and S_2 can be true in P_2. Further, and this is the crux of the relativist's position, it is asserted that there may be no neutral decision procedure or set of epistemic standards for adjudicating such contradictory assignments of truth values. As a corollary to this, it could further be derived that in cases where proponents of P_1 reject that knowledge structure and embrace P_2 such shifts cannot fully be described in terms of neutral standards of rationality but will be, at least in part, cases of conversion. This is what is meant by the assertion that knowledge claims are relative. Namely, relative to one or more knowledge structures which are, in turn, and in ways to be discovered, related in some way to a set of socio-cultural factors.[2]

The next few paragraphs deal with certain misunderstandings and inadequacies that have often arisen in the writings of both proponents and opponents of a relativist sociology of knowledge. In the hands of the former, they lead to obviously absurd and counterintuitive consequences which allow for easy refutation of the position. If such conceptions are advanced by opponents, then relativism does not get a fair hearing. Therefore it is necessary to dispense with these inadequate conceptions and then present a sketch of relativism which will at least be able to avoid superficial problems.

Relativism is, first of all, not subjectivism.[3] To say that

knowledge is relative is not to say that it is subjective in a person relative sense. It is therefore not a do-it-yourself view which would allow isolated individuals to shape their knowledge in arbitrary and highly variable ways. To say that knowledge is relative, is to imply that there are variable constitutive elements which are connected, within certain constraints, to human discretion. However, such discretion is, in the final analysis, not a matter of individual discretion. This implies that relativism refers to the characteristics of knowledge applicable to communities of knowers. Consequently, a relativist conception of knowledge directs attention to the intersubjective, not merely subjective aspect of all intellectual products.

Second, relativism, in the strong sense outlined above, makes reference to the possibility of intra-domain conflicts of knowledge and not only inter-domain variability of intellectual products. One writer (Todd, 1976) has interpreted relativism as implying, for example, that there can be both valid religious knowledge and valid scientific knowledge.[4] Relativism in its stronger and more interesting form however, asserts that there can be conflicting claims to knowledge made by participants who work within roughly similar methodological domains. Thus, given that knowledge is relative to world views, a single proposition can be true relative to one world view and false relative to another where both adherents to the dispute claim an empirical or scientific warrant for their claim.

The conception of relativism presented here is largely incompatible with its interpretation by at least one writer as referring only to the conditional or corrigible nature of knowledge. Bandyopadhyay (1971:20) has written that "the corrigibility of our knowledge is what

makes it relative rather than absolute." This immediately yields odd results when it is pointed out that such a vehement opponent of relativism as Popper also insists on the necessary corrigibility and conditional status of knowledge. In Popper's view the corrigibility of knowledge is precisely what enables scientific knowledge to represent an ever-ascending spiral to absolute knowledge.[5] It should be evident, that this result is undesirable in the relativist conception. Rather, empirical research within a relativist scheme should reveal that certain knowledge communities invoke the idea of the conditional status of knowledge as an epistemic norm or a regulative ideal. As a conceptual matter, however, it is necessary to exclude from a relativist account many of the implications contained in the characterization of knowledge as conditional.

Finally, the most signficant mischaracterization of relativism contends that relativism leads to or entails solipsism. More specifically, Lukes (1973:237, 238) contends that relativism "entails" a position of "pluralistic social solipsism" in which, for example, the Mannheimian idea of variable perspectives on a common reality becomes unintelligible. Trigg (1973:2) also asserts that "relativism ... means that it is impossible to conceive of any kind of independent reality." There have been some sociological proponents of relativism who, by virtue of a careless treatment of the ontological presuppositions of relativism, have fallen into a kind of solipsism which denies the existence of an external, independent reality existing apart from knowledge of it.[6] To avoid these problems, the conception of relativism presented here stresses that relativism implies skepticism and not solipsism.[7] The relativist can concede that there must be some meaning assigned to the conception of an independent reality which is not ontologically

contingent on the existence of knowers. However, the relativist asks skeptical questions as to the possible ways in which this reality is available to human knowers.

Philosophical Parameters of Relativism

It may clarify the organization of the next three sections if a brief characterization of the subject matter of the sociology of knowledge, namely knowledge, is offered. For the purposes of the sociologist, a standard epistemological conception of knowledge is entirely adequate. On this account, knowledge is justified true belief. The next three sections expand this definition. Some general concepts related to the nature of beliefs and their inter-relations are discussed in this section. A theory of truth compatible with relativism and the nature of objectivity and its relation to justification are considered in the subsequent two sections.

Relativism, whatever else it may imply, forces us to understand knowledge as an irreducibly human product. This has tended to become obscured by the evaluative intentions of sociologists. Persons are not knowers and social beings but are knowers because they are social. Thus the epistemic characteristics of knowledge which arise from its collective character and which, on the evaluative account are taken to be pernicious ('ideological') or incidental impediments ('interests' or 'distoring influences') are precisely those acknowledged by the relativist as constitutive of knowledge and knowledge communities. The following account is therefore intended to establish that relativism yields a fully humanistic conception of knowledge.

Starting at the most general and pervasive level, it is clear

that cognitive relativism entails some form of idealism. Idealism, in contrast to realism, is a doctrine which contends that knowledge has an irreducible and foundational reference to a mentalistic phenomenon. It should be stressed that idealism need not and in most of its extant forms does not lead to a form of solipsism which asserts that all which exists is mind. Rather, idealism assignes to some mentalistic entity a central epistemic or ontological position which conditions knowledge of an independent reality. At this general level, the connection between idealism and relativism should already be discernable. To understand knowledge as relative, it would be sufficient to establish that there are or at least can be, a plurality of possible and incommensurable structures of mentalistic reference by which knowledge is conditioned.

This commitment to an idealistic account of knowledge may at first seem incongruous given that a substantial part of this thesis has been directed at criticizing Mannheim's adoption of a certain form of idealism as a foundation for his evaluative sociology of knowledge. Mannheim's Hegelian form of idealism is, of course, an absolute idealsim which posits an all-embracing transcendent world mind in which finite minds are subsumed. This allowed Mannheim to espouse a transitory form of relativism in which a certain Hegelian faith provides the possibility of a transcendental reconciliation of either diachronic (the early essays) or synchronic (Ideology and Utopia) relativism. However, idealism is a multifarious doctrine and the form to be discussed below can be understood in an entirely naturalistic way. That is, the mentalistic reference assumed to exist can be understood as that which is constituted by the collective form of the human mind as it exists in its possibly variable forms. A sociology of knowledge founded on this sort

of naturalistic idealism would contend that knowledge must be viewed in relation to a pluralistic set of possible or extant epistemic foundations. This sort of sociology therefore makes reference only to communities of human knowers and therefore denies the possibility of a resolution of relativism which Mannheim found by imposing an inconsistent absolutist metaphysics.

A form of idealism which can support this conception of relativism has recently been developed by Rescher (1973) who calls his formulation "conceptual idealism". Rescher develops the thesis that the concepts and ideas which constitute knowledge arise from and thus bear an irreducible reference to mind rather than to an independent reality. This allows Rescher to argue that all epistemic elements including taxonomic organization of experience, explanatory frameworks, the complex of social categories, concepts of intentionality and purpose and evaluative categories are all "mind-involving" in that their nature and "adequate specification involves reference to mental operators and processes." Rescher's intention is therefore to show in what way the "conceptual framework we standardly deploy in thought and discourse about reality is a mind-oriented artifact whose component elements are in certain ways fundamentally mind-involving" (1973:5).

Rescher's conceptual idealism contains some important insights which clarify the basis of cognitive relativism and hence a programme for the sociology of knowledge. First, Rescher is intent upon distinguishing his "conceptual idealism" from the older, theistic or absolutist forms of idealsim. He maintains that "categorical frameworks are a social reality: they embody a shared conception of the 'way the world works' " (1973:23).[8] This also entails a rejection of the

Kantian form of transcendental idealism which posits a universality and necessity to the conceptual framework involved in all cognitive judgements. Rather, Rescher seems to find evidence for the correctness of idealism precisely because of the breakdown of the Kantian endeavor:

> The contributory role of mind in the formation of our view of the world-as-we-know-it inheres in the fact that a variety of very different conceptual frameworks can with equal validity be superimposed upon the order of 'empirical fact' ... Any experiental encounter with physical reality is thus significantly underdeterminate of the conceptualized perception that 'results' from it in human cognition (1973:9, 10).

This idealistic conception of knowledge, is therefore seen to entail some degree of relativism in which knowledge is relativized to an intersubjective conceptual framework.

It is important to show how this form of idealism can, as noted above, escape the charge that it inevitably leads to solipsism or the denial of an external reality apart from knowledge of it. Rescher is intent upon refuting this charge when he denies that reality as it is "conceived ... in mind invoking terms ... can exist only for mind" (1973:15). Rather, it is asserted than an independent reality (or the items that are cognized) is the material substratum of our knowledge. However to introduce the possibility of knowledge of it (or the item as it is cognized) is, of necessity, to introduce mind reference.[9]

This distinction is important for two reasons. First, it defends relativism against some refutations which relate to its alleged entailment of solipsism. Second, it eliminates some of the counter-intuitive results of relativist accounts of knowledge which may have given rise to such refutations. Perhaps the most notorious examples

of such results are Kuhn's ruminations that the phenomenon of paradigm shifts "urges us to say" that the scientific revolutionaries "lived in a different world" or "worked in a different world" (1970a:117, 120). On an idealistic account of relativism these strange locutions disappear by reasoning that changes in conceptual structure or paradigms involve changes in the way the world is known but, for knowledge of physical reality at least, no changes in the world as it exists initself.

Idealism fixes only the most pervasive parameters of relativism. In order to understand how the doctrine is connected with the operation of more specific epistemic terms such as meaning, reference, and truth some attention must be given to a central debate among contemporary philosophers, namely, the question of realism versus anti-realism. Affirming realism has diverse ramifications. Within the context of scientific theory, theoretical realism affirms that theoretical terms or terms naming unobserved entities do, in fact, have as their reference entities in the external world which are assumed to exist in the way specified by mature scientific theory. Realism interprets scientific progress as convergence toward a situation in which scientific theory arrives at a state in absolute correspondence with reality. Within the context of a theory of language use, realism entails that the meaning of sentences and their component parts is determined by the truth conditions which are fixed by an independent reality. Thus to know the meaning of a linguistic unit is to know its truth conditions which are taken to be the states of affairs which obtain when it is true or false. Therefore to describe what it is that makes a statement meaningful is to describe the determinate truth conditions set by the world which may be independent of our actual capacity to decide what

those truth conditions are.[10]

It should be clear that relativism is supported by the competing doctrine, anti-realism.[11] Relativism as argued for in the work of Kuhn and Feyerabend appeals to the idea that the meaning of theoretical terms in alledgedly incommensurable theories does not remain stable across theory change. If this is the case, then it is difficult to retain a sense for the realist contention that these terms refer to entities in the world which, in the nature of the case, cannot be said to change when paradigms undergo revolutionary change.[12] Thus the nature and reference of theoretical entities is explained internally or relatively to the theories in which they are postulated.

With regard to linguistic concepts, anti-realism proceeds in much the same manner. Whereas for realism, meaning is determined by determinate truth conditions, the central notions of a theory of meaning and truth for anti-realism are those of verification and falsification. Meanings of statements are therefore said by the anti-realist not to be determined in terms of the conditions under which these statements are determinately true or false, conceived of as conditions which obtain or do not obtain independently of our knowledge or capacity for knowledge. Rather, a theory of meaning for the anti-realist is to be stated in terms of the conditions under which we recognize empirical events as establishing the truth or falsity of statements of that class. And these conditions are said to be the verification conditions of statements. In this way, the emphasis is on the epistemic capacities and practices which are actually in use in given language and knowledge communities.

Perhaps this distinction between realism and anti-realism can

be made more concrete if it is recalled that this same distinction is co-extensive with that made by commentators between the early and late philosophy of Wittgenstein. Wittgenstein's later view was that language was to be thought of as a set of social practices. Therefore, in order to understand how language works, attention must be focused on the uses to which its sentences are put in relation to the circumstances in which they are used. He thus came to view as mistaken the idea that independently determinate features of the world unilaterally fix meaning. In short, Wittgenstein abandoned his early realist notion of language in which reality is reflected in language and developed an anti-realism in which language is said to reflect, for its own purposes and therefore variably, reality.

This distinction is also what is behind an often quoted but cryptic passage from Winch (1970:82): "Reality is not what gives language sense. What is real and what is unreal shows itself in the sense that language has." Thus Winch has argued that there can be no access to reality external to the context of any language. It is said to follow that language use and hence knowledge cannot be neutrally compared apart from any particular language use against an independent reality in order to find if language is being used correctly or whether knowledge expressed in that language is 'really true'. Therefore, according to Winch, the concept of the independently real and the conventions which direct access to the real are given only indigenously within the framework of discrete and hence possibly variable languages and forms of life.

In Winch's work anti-realism is appealed to in order to support his relativistic claims. More generally, this link between anti-realism and relativism can be observed in the way that anti-realists wish to

collapse the distinction between epistemology and ontology. Wright (1976:226f) has shown that for a significant set of assertions which include higher level theoretical assertions about social and physical reality there is no conceivable epistemic or direct experiential access to the realist's truth conditions which are said to be determined by an independently decisive reality. In this sense the realist is committed to a transcendent concept of truth and hence to a concept which allows for an assertion to be made true or false by a condition that lies beyond the reach of any actual or possible verification.

The anti-realist however, is unsatisfied with this characteristic of the truth conditions posited by the realist. Truth conditions which are epistemically unavailable to human knowers are unable to explain how humans in fact use and understand language. They contend therefore that an account of the meanings of such assertions is to be given by the human practices which establish the verification and falsification experiences which conventionally establish the assertability conditions for such assertions. In this way, it is asserted that what there is in the world for us to know is constituted in part by the possible ways in which humans can have access to the reference of knowledge claims. This is the sense in which anti-realists mitigate the distinction between epistemology and ontology.

The way in which anti-realism is compatible with and lends support to relativism is implicit in the preceeding discussion. First, it is a conception which introduces in a strong or constitutive sense the contribution which humans make to the content and standards of knowledge. It suggests, in addition, how the content of human institutions and world view content might be inter-related with more specifically

epistemic conventions and practices. It can therefore explain how in certain realms of knowledge (e.g. especially social knowledge in which there is demonstrably a plurality of disparate world views operating on the same content) a plurality of theories about that realm might arise contemporaneously.

It can finally be noted that anti-realism is, to a great extent compatible, with the variety of pluralist idealism sketched above. In both conceptions, epistemic operations are to be construed as internal to theories, paradigms or conceptual schemes. These epistemic structures are to be understood as generating internally valid ontologies, linguistic meanings, and procedures for assignments of truth values to sentences.

To this point, it has been suggested that an outright espousal of idealism as well as a form of less extremely idealistic anti-realism is compatible in the ways briefly indicated with epistemological relativism. A third, and final, issue which is a topic of much current debate and which is also compatible with relativism in definite ways is the contention that theories are underdetermined by observation.[13]

To claim that observation underdetermines theory is to assert that there can be no terms in an observation language the use of which are sufficiently accounted for in terms of direct observation or empirical associations alone. This is to say that the meaning of observation terms is not fully given independently of laws and theoretical terms in the theory of which it is the observation language. The use and meaning of observation terms or statements therefore is given or influenced in a significant manner by various other more general laws and theoretical statements of the theory in which the observation terms are

contained. Observation reports are in this sense theory laden.

The standard examples of this interaction between observation and theory are observation terms such as 'falling body' in which the meaning of the terms are differentially influenced by theoretical concepts and laws relating to gravity, acceleration, and so forth. Although social concepts have not explicitly been treated in this way, it might be expected that they are especially amenable to such analysis. Consider the concept of alienation. Here observation reports of the form "Jones is alienated' would have wide divergence of meaning depending on whether the term was ascribed by a Marxist (laws and concepts relating to relations of production), an existentialist (concepts relating to the 'human condition') or a bougeois psychiatrist (concepts relating to personal adjustment and individuation). That such theoretical concepts are underdetermined by experience should, incidentally, serve to demonstrate why popular efforts to fix 'the' meaning of alienation or even to find the common meaning of diverse accounts cannot succeed.

The most important consequence of the claim that observation terms are theory laden is that statements of the 'facts' picked out by observation can no longer be expected to determine or confirm a unique theory or set of explanations of natural or social events. In short, it is the semantic inter-relatedness or, to some extent, the circularity of theory and observation languages which is basic to the claim that theory is underdetermined by observation.

The second and related claim that follows from this doctrine is that theories are not, strictly speaking, refutable. If laws and theories are not inductively built up from an accumulation of neutral sensory evidence which they are then said to explain, and if the meaning of

observation terms is not given in isolation from that of the rest of the theoretical terms in the theory, then it is said to follow that experience cannot unambiguously, show any individual hypotheses implied by a theory to be false. If this is correct, then theories cannot be refuted in the manner traditionally supposed. In the Kuhnian idiom, anomalies can always be explained away or accounted for by means of minor shifts in or accretions to the theory held by a community of scientists. Although an accumulation of anomalies may create pressures on scientists to give up a particular theory or paradigm, such large scale shifts of theoretical allegiance cannot be described as refutation of the theory but rather are to be accounted for with the aid of political or sociological metaphors.

Clearly underdetermination of theories is an important concept for the relativist. Its importance rests on the possibility that the opponent of relativism could dismiss the contention that the pervasive form of idealism adopted above supported a strong form of relativism. The opponent's challenge could continue that the mind referential conceptual structure entailed by idealism was common to humans, or at least those of Western culture, and that once in place there could be no irreducible or unmittigated contradictions in assignment of truth values which the relativist thesis presupposes.

However to say that theories are underdetermined by observational evidence allows that even within a group of knowledge communities which share an identical conceptual structure at a general level, as well as common elements of an observation language, there could still be competing and incommensurable theories. This may occur because observational evidence is not regarded as determining a unique and singularly correct

theory. Moreover, in the face of a failure of hypothesized predictions any theory could be saved by making revisions in theoretical laws and the theoretical contributions to the meaning of observation terms. Further, because theoretical indeterminism undermines the empiricist account of scientific method based on a foundation of neutral observation reports, it also follows that there are no fully neutral epistemic standards which would dictate tolerance levels for accumulation of anomolies and (ambiguously) failed predictions. Therefore, in the face of any particular piece of disconfirming evidence, it is always possible for proponents of the theory to maintain the conceptual and theoretical framework as a whole. If the motivating values and goals associated with the theory are the driving force of the entire endeavor, then it may be justified to maintain crucial parts of the theory in the face of much contradictory evidence by altering observation implications of theoretical laws which can be accomplished by meaning shifts occurring in the conceptual structure.[14]

Such reasoning already provides a hint as to the potentials for empirical research yielded by the notion of underdetermination. Barnes (1973) senses this when he suggests as suitable research topics the study of the ways in which various knowledge communities treat empirical falsification and anomalies. He briefly suggests ways in which the function and values of knowledge communities and their relation to the society in which they are embedded may be associated with their sensitivity to anomalies and the subsequent degree of revision of the belief system which they produce.

A standard challenge to the notion that theory is underdetermined and that observation terms are theory laden is to draw the paradoxical

conclusion that if the doctrine were correct there could be no comparison between theories. That is, if the meanings of theoretical terms, and hence observation terms, are incommensurable across theories and more generally, knowledge communities, then there could never be real conflict between theories since, quite literally, the proponents of different theories speak different languages. But this is clearly absurd so the concept of underdetermination is incorrect.[15] This argument is also damaging to the form of truth value relativism stated above since complete incommensurability of meaning implies that there are no statements which can be said to be non-trivially true relative to one theory or community and false relative to another.

Such problems only arise, however, if underdeterminism is maintained in a crude form. More careful analyses of the history of science have shown, and analyses of paradigms in the area of social theory might also reveal, that there is a significant area of intersection in the application of terms in an observation language between competing theories which are, at the level of laws and theoretical terms, incommensurable (Hesse, 1974:35). The argument from the paradoxical results of complete incommensurability fails because it can be shown that, although there is no completely neutral observation language, ordinary language or intersecting observation languages provide a set of observation predicates which are less entrenched in the theoretical language or laden with meaning provided by theoretical terms and laws. Consider for example, a Marxist and an industrial psychologist arguing over causes and remedies of industrial vandalism by workers. Observing particular instances of vandalism, the former may see an alienated member of the proletariat while the latter may see a mal-adjusted employee. If the argument from

incommensurability were correct, these two observers would be speaking such obviously different languages so as to preclude mutual understanding. Yet this counter-intuitive result can be accommodated by a relativism supported by underdetermination by asserting that the two observers in question share an observation language at the level of what Anscombe (1958) has called brute facts. Brute facts call attention to a level of relatively theory free observation terms which, in turn, help account for understanding of the common or shared social world which the Marxist and industrial psychologist inhabit. By reference to such facts the act of vandalism in question could be mutually described as 'worker-placing-wrench-in-machine' or by means of the even more brute facts given by a series of observations describable by discrete space-time co-ordinates given by the movements of the individual in question.

It has been asserted (Williams, 1975) that for relativism to be maintained in a strong form, there must be within the nexus of incommensurably exclusive theories and/or world views some manner for arriving at agreed descriptions of propositions or descriptions of events or states of affairs. Only in this condition would there be the possibility of mutual understanding of a common language which provides the context for conflicting theoretical and world view claims which are said to be irreducibly relative to particular knowledge communities. The idea of a common or intersecting language of brute facts satisfies this condition of shared description. Yet it must not be thought, as do numerous proponents of an evaluative sociology of knowledge, that, by careful attention to such brute facts, a uniquely true account of reality could be developed. This is not plausible because such facts underdetermine theoretical or world-view accounts of the physical and

social world for two reasons. First, because theoretical terms have meaning which is not reducible to brute facts and second, brute facts cannot decisively refute theoretical hypotheses.

Many social sciences have not found it difficult to assent to a very broadly based cultural relativism related to societies holding very different conceptual structures or world views. The concept of underdetermination is crucial for understanding how relativism can obtain between knowledge communities who share elements of identical conceptual structures and elements of a common world view. Even when such brute facts are in force, the underdetermination of the theoretical accounts of the shared reality yielded by these commonalities can be incommensurably relative to conflicting knowledge communities. The account above is intended to show in a general way why this is so and to suggest that the empirical forms and historical development of underdetermined theoretical accounts of physical and social reality provides interesting content for empirical study.

The Problem of Truth in the Sociology of Knowledge

This issue is considered to be of such importance and difficulty that is has generated quite a large literature as well as at least two essays with this rubric as their title. Generally the problem is solved by a reliance on some form of the evaluative sociology of knowledge.[16] This solution has been relied upon because many have felt that Mannheim's limited relativism set terms which do not admit of any solution to the problem of truth and which thus lead to a self-refutation.

There are two tasks to be accomplished in order to show how a solution to this problem can be attained — one methodological and the

other philosophical. The methodological task is to demonstrate what sort of actions are bound up with the concept of truth as it occurs within knowledge communities. It should be clear that a relativist sociology of knowledge would require an epistemically neutral account of truth or, more precisely, a neutral account of ascriptions of truth. Awarding evaluative epistemological descriptions of this concept to specific knowledge communities (e.g. correspondence to facts) entails a form of the evaluative sociology of knowledge which has already been discarded. Yet avoiding the issue of truth in empirical study implies that the understanding of this concept devolves to epistemology and thus entails the agnostic version of the evaluative programme.

Such a neutral, action-oriented account is to be found in the performative theory of truth. Strawson (1949) has been the primary advocate of this theory. In a series of papers, Strawson has asserted that it is a mistake to regard ascriptions of truth as being descriptive in either a correspondence or semantic sense. He claimed to have shown that the word 'true' cannot, in non-formalized languages at least, be construed as a meta-linguistic term used to refer to sentences in an object language (i.e. Tarski's semantic conception of truth) or to describe relations among sentences (coherence theory) or a relation between sentences and facts or states of affairs (correspondence theory). Strawson (1949:92) instead makes the claim that "the phrase 'is true' never has a statement-making role." Rather, the phrase and its cognates are uttered in order to perform some action on the part of the speaker in response to statements. Strawson finds evidence for this claim by showing that the result which the phrase 'is true' accomplishes can also be accomplished by substituting for this phrase the verbs 'agree',

'confirm', 'concede', 'admit', and so forth. Thus the phrase 'is true' is a gloss for a whole range of actions and therefore, Strawson concludes, a species of what Austin termed performative utterances. These are utterances which acutally perform the action which they appear to be describing. Therefore, by saying a sentence is true one is actually "confirming, underwriting, admitting, or agreeing with what somebody has said" (1949:93).[17]

This leads Strawson to recommend that "better than asking 'what is the criterion of truth?' is to ask 'what are the grounds of agreement?' " (1949:94). In this way he suggests an incipient sociological research programme which dissolves many of the troubling questions which sociologists have considered as impediments to empirically treating matters of truth and falsity. It is further noted by Strawson (1949:16) that questions of truth most often arise when doubt and disagreement are aroused. This implies that the process of justification and 'is true' utterances are intimately connected.[18]

In light of the preceeding remarks, a first approach at an adequate methodological conception of truth for a relativist sociology of knowledge would be the following. When an individual says that a statement 'is true' (or any of its equivalent translations, e.g. 'correct' or 'confirmed') he is communicating one of two intentions with reference to justification: (1) the intention of performing an act of justification in accordance with socially established linguistic and epistemic conventions so as to eliminate, as far as possible, doubts of others; or (2) the intention to accept (or the implication that he has accepted) the justification for the statement communicated (or made mundanely available) by others.

While Strawson's theory and the methodological definition of truth based on his contribution may be suggestive with regard to a research programme, it seems to be generally acknowledged that the performative theory of truth is philosophically inadequate. A standard reply to Strawson concedes that he has correctly identified features of the use of the terms 'true' and 'false' but has not provided any insight as to the point or meaning of applying or responding with these concepts to statements. Since it is no longer fashionable to dissolve these concerns by making vague appeals to ordinary language, it seems clear that some philosophical or conceptual consideration needs to be given to the concept of truth in addition to the analysis of standards and patterns of use which is adequate for methodological purposes.[19]

That a relativist sociology of knowledge does not eliminate the need for a philosophically informed conceptual analysis of truth is revealed by the results obtained in an essay by McHugh (1970). After claiming to refute every formulation of truth which has ever been conceived — correspondence, coherence, and pragmatic in their various forms — he asserts that "truth is conceivable only as a socially organized upshot of contingent courses of linguistic, conceptual and social course of behavior ... to study truth is to study the ways truth can be methodically confered" (1970:329). This conclusion is interesting in that it represents an independently derived result very similar to Strawson's. Yet it demonstrates even more clearly the philosophical vacuity of this analysis of truth. To assert that ascriptions of truth are rule governed is methodologically important but to assert that truth is only or nothing but rule guided fails to consider important questions concerning what epistemic or cognitive content these rules operate on.

Moreover, by avoiding philosophical commitments on this matter, or merely asserting that they have all been refuted as McHugh does, threatens to lead to a form of the agnostic stance in the evaluative sociology of knowledge in which it is assumed that answers to philosophical questions are available but are not the concern of sociologists.

It cannot be denied that relativism entails a rather definite dethroning of the notions of truth and falsity from the places of prominence they have traditionally been accorded in philosophy. The philosophical task in solving the problem of truth in the sociology of knowledge is to show how this follows from the philosophical parameters developed above. To accomplish this would serve to philosophically buttress the methodological definition of truth which, in the absence of such consideration, is philosophically uninformative.

The theory of truth which seems most compatible with relativism is that known as the redundancy theory. To say that truth is redundant is to suggest that asserting 'p is true' is equivalent in meaning to asserting 'p'. It will be noticed that the redundancy theory is entirely compatible with the performative theory on which the methodological conception of truth is developed above. This because once locutions such as 'is true' or 'is correct' are freed from the idea that they have a descriptive content in the way that assertive utterances must have, they can then be seen as having the performative function of agreement expression in language communities.

The redundancy theory is further connected with the form of anti-realism which provides crucial support to relativism. Anti-realism denies that an account of meaning is to be given by appeal to the truth conditions of statements when these are understood as being determinately set

by conditions in the world independent of the cognitive capacities of knowers. Therefore, just as meaning for the anti-realist is set by reference to verification conditions under which it may properly be asserted or used by language communities, truth becomes defined for particular language and knowledge communities in terms of warranted assertibility or provability. Truth, rather than being a universal relation of correspondence accessible to the epistemically priviledged, is defined intra-theoretically or, more generally, as the standards and conditions of warranted assertability which obtain in localized knowledge and speech communities.

The replacement of the notion of truth by something like warranted assertability or provability was originally suggested by the pragmatists and has recently been upheld by anti-realists (Dummett, 1959:160f). Apparently, the pragmatists who suggested this redefinition of truth so as to avoid specious metaphysical claims felt that they lost little of the realist content of truth since the full form of their substitution was "warranted assertability in conditions of ideal inquiry" (Putnam, 1978:36). However, it should be clear that appeals to notions like ideal inquiry or convergence toward conditions of ideal inquiry are untenably naive or optimistic especially in the human sciences. Moreover, recent interest in the history of physical science and some inchoate findings in the sociology of knowledge should defeat any useful or neutral reliance on the idea that there is a single epistemic standard or framework of meaning (beyond technological control of the environment which severely underdetermines ontology) toward which science and knowledge converges.

The notion of truth as warranted assertability or provability

leaves open the specific content or form of actual truth theories which are in force in various knowledge communities. That is, if truth is re-interpreted as warranted assertability in order to be consistent with the premises of a relativist sociology of knowledge, then the standards and interpretations of truth in use in various knowledge communities and therefore the norms which set truth conditions for various categories of assertions may well vary in significant ways. This variation can be expected to occur along the dimensions specified by traditional conceptions of truth such that one might expect scientific communities to employ truth criteria which depend heavily on the notion of empirical correspondence with the world and religious communities to rely more strongly on coherence criteria. In any case, the study of truth theories constitutes a potentially fruitful and interesting research programme for the sociology of knowledge as does the study of variable tolerances to anomalies suggested above.

In the light of both philosophical and methodological interests, the relativist sociology of knowledge is not committed to McHugh's programme of attempting to refute the possibility in any form of traditional conceptions of truth. Rather, for methodological purposes, the discipline would be interested in the social process involved in the development and implementation of truth criteria in various communities. The conceptual or philosophical interpretation which truth theories receive by both subjects and analysts can, without inconsistency, be given in terms of the notions of truth which have traditionally been discussed in philosophy. As might be expected however, relativism is committed to a denial that any one interpretation of truth and therefore any extant truth theory is epistemically priviledged in an

absolute or universal sense.

Objectivity

The remarks here can be quite brief since much has already been said indirectly concerning the conception of objectivity to which relativism is committed. Objectivity is an epistemological concept but there are two very different ways in which the concept is explicated; one via ontology, the other via intersubjectivity. The former, and more common conception of objectivity, equates objective judgements with true judgements or, equivalently, with correct judgements as to how the world really is. That the attainment of objective judgements involves following agreed upon rules of methodological procedure which cancel the subjective, the idiosyncratic and the prejudicial elements which may hinder the attainment of knowledge is acknowledged by proponents of the ontological conception of objectivity but it is seen as secondary or only as a means to objectivity and not its actual content.

As might be expected, objectivity, viewed from the position of relativism, is conceived primarily by means of the concept of intersubjectivity. Objectivity is primarily intersubjective in the sense that it presupposes and is constituted by first, a conceptual structure which provides the basis for a shared set of meanings and expectations for the universe of discourse of a knowledge community and second, a shared set of criteria and rules of procedure which govern the application of concepts to empirical phenomena and direct the production and justification of knowledge. The concept of objectivity therefore has close conceptual connections with that of agreement and of following a rule and indeed, to enjoin others to be objective is, in part, a directive

to adhere to common grounds for argument and discussion.

The most significant implication of this conception of objectivity is that it becomes illegitimate to characterize entire conceptual schemes or entire knowledge communities as being either objective or non-objective. Rather, what is objective and what is non-objective or merely subjective can only be assessed via an internal analysis of the concepts and standards in use by particular knowledge communities. Conceiving objectivity via the concept of intersubjectivity is to question whether it is tenable to assert, as do those who hold the ontological conception of objectivity, that the object of knowledge uniquely determines the epistemic apparatus which insures an accurate reflection of how the world really is. If, however, the knower brings to the object of knowledge intersubjectively shared concepts and epistemic standards which are constituted through a more complex interaction between the world, human discretion, and the human mind, then it is impossible to operate wholly apart from that conceptual scheme in order to assess its objectivity by means of a point of view outside the conceptual scheme being assessed.

This result follows from the anti-realism which underlies relativism. That is, the phenomena and properties which are objectively construed as being constituents of the external and independent world are, in part shaped by shared linguistic meanings and epistemic standards. By this line of thought, there is no sense in inquiring as to whether the objective knowledge produced by any one knowledge community is characterized by an unmediated and directly given contact with reality. However, to contend that the primary criteria of objectivity is intersubjective agreement does not isolate communities of knowers from the

object of knowledge. That is, the conventions and practices which shape the content of knowledge can be said to interact with the manner in which we build theoretical and causal accounts of the object of knowledge. This access is not, by virtue of commonalities in perceptual and reasoning processes, arbitrarily or infinitely variable. This is to suggest that understanding objectivity by means of intersubjectivity still allows the retention of some aspect of the classical notion of objectivity namely, faithfulness to the object. To suggest that objectivity is relative is therefore to suggest that the discretion manifested in variable human institutions mediates the parameters of this faithfulness.[20]

From this, it does not follow however that, once in place, the body of knowledge supported by an internally justified objectivity is immune from criticism and correction. The notion of criticism which this conception of objectivity yields does not rely on the idea of a comparison of a system of knowledge with directly given, decisive empirical evidence as has often been supposed. In contrast to this view, criticism in the model of objectivity as intersubjectivity is said to proceed internally. In order to criticize and correct features of objective knowledge there must be a framework of beliefs and standards given by the conceptual framework in use which are not themselves in question. In this way criticism and correction proceed by utilizing accepted regions of a conceptual framework to inquire about elements of beliefs which are problematic or in question. Criticism and correction are epistemic processes which are therefore relative to intersubjectively accepted concepts and standards of objectivity.

This formal characterization of objectivity leaves open the

manner in which it may be instantiated within different knowledge communities. It is, of course, in this sense that objectivity is relative to the conceptual framework and epistemic standards of specific knowledge communities. Discovering how it is so related would be an important research task for a relativist sociology of knowledge. This conception of objectivity also shows by contrast, how the pursuit of an evaluative sociology of knowledge (excepting the work of Mannheim) is empirically obfuscatory and conceptually misguided. By assigning their own objectivity a priviledged ontological status, the manner in which objectivity crucially depends on intersubjectivity is subjugated so as to allow the possibly divergent standards of objectivity operating in the knowledge communities under study to be ascribed to social distortion, bias or other forms of epistemic malfeasance. Imposing external standards of objectivity onto other knowledge communities is simple compared to the more intricate task of understanding diverse forms of objectivity suggested by a relativist sociology of knowledge.

Before considering some common challenges to relativism, two final remarks should be made. First, to say that knowledge is relative does not necessarily entail that there exist a plurality of knowledge communities within single methodological domains. For example, it seems to be the case in the realm of physical science that there is a single world community of science at least with regard to a common stock of knowledge and standards of objectivity. However, because of the conceptual understanding of knowledge found in the idealism and anti-realism presupposed by relativism, scientific knowledge can still be said to be relative to that world community of scientists. This observation is meant to illustrate how relativism is a conceptual conclusion which can

be characterized as an extreme response to the downfall of foundationalism in its empiricist and rationalist forms and the acceptance that knowledge is only possible within socio-historical contexts. No doubt relativism will be of more empirical interest to sociologists when it obtains synchronically among conflicting knowledge communities. But keeping in mind that relativism is a conceptual aspect of knowledge and not a transitory and contingent feature of it arising from social conflict should serve to show why the intellectual mitigation of it envisioned by the evaluative sociology of knowledge reveals a misconception concerning the nature of knowledge.

Finally, to assert that all knowledge is relative to the knowledge community or communities which produce and affirm it is not to deny that there are universal but contingent commonalities which condition and constrain human knowledge. It has been suggested that such commonalities are in operation at various levels of human knowledge and human life. Hamlyn (1975:255, 256), following Wittgenstein, employs the concept of a form of life in this way. Interpreting this vague Wittgensteinian notion in a way analogous to what Kant calls a form of sensibility, he asserts that "forms of life constitute the anchoring points for conceptual systems." This is equivalent to saying that at certain points, found especially in perceptual and primitive cognitive processes, the content of a substratum of knowledge is not merely conventional. It constitutes, in part, what it is to be human. Thus, we would find it odd to categorize a group of otherwise humanly appearing organisms who did not possess any concept of number or colour as human. Our form of life therefore yields epistemic commonalities and areas of overlap between knowledge communities. It is via this

notion, for example, that the idea of brute facts, briefly explored above, can gain a foothold.

Winch, who has been perhaps the most forceful advocate of a form of conceptual relativism, has been at pains to stress the limitations or constraints on relativism. Following Vico, he locates such "limiting notions" in anthropological universals of human life such as birth, death and sexual relations which are bound up with the meaning which all men and women, primitive and modern, attempt to fashion for their lives (1970:107f). Further, Winch has not denied that there are certain formal constraints on human thought and rationality which are formulated in some of our logical notions or laws such as non-contradiction and identity as well as the material constraint of the assumption of a common and independent world.

Acknowledgement of such commonalities is, however, not damaging to the relativist thesis. It is, rather more plausible in view of them.[21] What makes the relativist thesis viable is the observation that these commonalities, while they do constrain relativism such that it does not lead to a counter-intuitive, world view proliferating, 'anything goes' parody of the position, do not serve to uniquely order the range of cultures, societies and knowledge communities along putatively neutral ethical or epistemic standards. This point will be elaborated in the defense of relativism against some common criticisms and refutations.

Challenges to Relativism

The criticism of relativism which has traditionally been thought to have the most force is the charge that it is self-refuting in the sense that it makes use of epistemic notions of which it denies the

possibility. It is argued that those who claim that knowledge is relative deny their own claim merely by asserting it. The relativist thesis is, of course, an item of knowledge which is asserted as true and it claims to have the status of objective knowledge. Yet, the critic continues, it is just these characteristics of knowledge which the relativist thesis denies are available for knowledge claims. Thus the relativist must contradict himself in enunciating his claim. He therefore has no warrent to be taken seriously.[22]

First, it needs to be established that the difficulty is not, strictly speaking, a logical one. However some writers (e.g. Walter, 1967:349f) have seen a parallel in this issue with the problems that Russell encountered in his work in set theory which eventually led to the theory of types.[23] Russell found that the logic of sets was prone to generate vicious circles when, among other reasons, a proposition is advanced which refers to or ascribes a property to a class of which it, itself, is a member. This entails the unwanted result that no proposition can be said to refer to all other propositions since to assert such a proposition presupposes that the class it refers to is complete. Yet this is a contradiction; the universal proposition in question also belongs to this class and it is therefore incomplete until that proposition itself has been mentioned. The consequence of this situation is that it rules out any general theory about propositions or about sets of any entities. This problem led Russell to develop the famous or notorious theory of types which postulated a convoluted series of meta-levels which were designed to rescue set theory from the paradoxes it incurred when all propositions were said to be of the same logical type or level.

For many years, this theory was a central focus of debate among

philosophers and logicians. One of the more striking contributions which Russell endorsed was provided by P.F. Ramsey who identified two sources of logical paradox. The first was generated in the formal language employed to construct axiomatic systems, the other was generated semantically in ordinary language when such systems are talked about.[24]

The moral of this episode, and one which Russell himself drew, is that paradoxes can be avoided if we are clear on the meaning of the words which constitute them. With regard to relativism, the charge that is is self-refuting loses force if the relativist is careful to specify the meaning of the terms which constitute the relativist thesis itself. The discussion of relativism above shows clearly how this can be accomplished. If I, for example, say that " 'all knowledge is relative' is true" I assert my readiness to justify vis a vis my own knowledge community and other knowledge communities to the extent that common grounds of argument can be established that that claim is a warranted assertion. It is objective to the extent that I am able to satisfy rules of procedure and make reference to shared concepts of those same knowledge communities.

To be consistent, the relativist must explicitly assert knowledge claims and especially the relativist thesis itself, relativistically. This reflexivity can be explicitly achieved by utterances of the form: 'true-for-us', 'true-for-our theory', 'true-for-our-world-view', etc. No doubt sociologists who have asserted the relativist thesis have not always been scrupulous in this regard. However, if they are, then the relativist thesis is not at all self-refuting for, when explicitly advanced, it embodies the sort of reappraisals concerning knowledge which it attempts to establish.[25] That this explicit relativization of knowledge claims is psychologically odd is true, but psychological

incongruities should not be taken as logical difficulties.

There are two criticisms which depend on what are taken to be empirical refutations of relativism. The first deals with the phenomenon of inter-perspectival understanding. It has been argued by Lukes (1973) that relativism entails that inter-perspectival or inter-world view understanding is impossible yet since this is obviously not the case, relativism must be false. His argument attempts to demonstrate the necessity of universal criteria of rationality and of access to a shared reality without which any sort of understanding between alien cultures or different world views could not be established. He therefore argues, in considering the beliefs of an alien culture, that if rationality is context dependent and consequently, that if forms of reasoning are "pure matters of convention ... then ... how could we ever understand their thought, their inferences and their arguments?" (Lukes, 1973:238).

This line of thought has been an influential one, yet the relativist can accept most of what Lukes and those who reason like him[26] have said and still contend that the relativist thesis is not damaged. As noted above, relativism does not entail that there are no universal (but humanly contingent) criteria of rationality or anthropological features of human life. The relativist however asserts that such features leave open or only formally constrain the form of human thought and reasoning and in this way, the possibility of irreducible ethical and epistemic diversity is preserved.

Asserting by means of a transcendental or merely formal argument that certain forms and criteria of argument must be shared if inter-perspectival understanding is to be possible does little to rule out any

particular content or possible meanings of the propositions which these forms or criteria constrain. Therefore, although there are and must be universal criteria for understanding, such criteria cannot (neutrally) act as a means of criticizing or evaluating alien systems of beliefs and action.[27] That such criteria can act in this way is the conclusion which Lukes wishes to draw but he has not made it clear how they function in this way. Winch also has briefly indicated that universal criteria cannot serve as criteria of neutral evaluation by saying that systems of beliefs "are limited by certain formal requirements centering round the demand for consistency. But these formal requirements tell us nothing about what in particular is to count as consistency" (1970: 100). Lukes cites this passage (1973:233) but calls it "mysterious". It is, however, no more mysterious than the distinction between the formal or symbolic representations of reasoning and the interpretation of a symbolic calculus provided by the semantic content which is given by the particular knowledge and meanings available in various knowledge and language communities.

A second empirically based argument against relativism is based on the possibility and nature of cognitive change. Gellner (1973) has in particular stressed this line of attack against Winch and therefore against cultural relativism. It is on the basis of locating "quite mistaken substantive beliefs about concrete societies" (1973:54) that Winch and relativism are held by Gellner to be refuted. Lukes (1973: 243) has also made this charge: "only by assuming rational criteria applicable to all contexts can one fully explain why men abandon religious beliefs, or scientific paradigms."

The issue is admittedly a complex one and demonstrating that

relativism can account for and describe cognitive change is largely a matter of careful empirical study rather than only conceptual reasoning. However, Luke's and especially Gellner's charge seems to suggest or presuppose that relativism postulates that systems of beliefs are static and closed in a way that would rule out cognitive innovation and correction. No doubt sociologists have sometimes suggested that this is the case,[28] but there is nothing about the relativist thesis which necessitates the view that the conceptual structures within which knowledge communities operate need be closed to innovation or impervious to alternative standards of knowledge and conceptual structures.

To refute such charges it would be enough to establish, first, that it is possible to criticize hypotheses stated within particular conceptual structures from within that conceptual structure. However, as noted above, the relativist would submit that for empirical circumstances to falsify a particular hypothesis, there must be a framework of background assumptions, not themselves in question, which give meaning to the hypothesis in question and therefore set grounds for its refutation. But these background assumptions need not extend over the entire conceptual scheme in question and therefore any given assumption or hypothesis can, in principle, be subject to empirical or discursive tests and emendation. By showing (contra Lukes) that it is possible for a conceptual scheme to be questioned, tested, and amended from within the same conceptual scheme, the relativist can account for the process of cognitive change and internal criticism and correction. Again, Winch has succinctly (although rather cyptically) stated the point that innovation and cognitive correction proceed internally by asserting that "the intelligibility of anything new said or done does depend in a certain

way on what has already been said or done or understood" (1970:96).

A second way in which the relativist can account for cognitive change is by means of the availability of some competing criterion of rationality or, more generally, some alternative conceptual scheme. Again how such change actually proceeds and the extra-cognitive factors which are related to it are matters of empirical study. An interesting case study of this process would concern the paradigm shift which the prominent American black activist, Immamu Amiri Baraka, initiated. Baraka, a central figure in a radical knowledge community in Newark, New Jersey quite suddenly renounced pan-African nationalism and embraced what he termed the "scientific socialism of Marx and Engels."[29] There is no reason in this case, the relativist would assert, to assume that Marxism is in unique possession of universal rational criteria or truth concerning social reality. Rather a study of this case might well reveal certain tensions within and failures of the rejected world view which suggested to Baraka and those who followed him that Marxism would better serve their generally defined moral and social objectives which are elements of their world view which remained largely stable through the paradigm shift.

In contrast, the explanation of Baraka's paradigm shift presents problems for those who reason as Lukes does. Lukes has written (1973:243) that it is "only by assuming rational criteria applicable to all contexts can one fully explain why men abandon religious beliefs, or scientific paradigms." Lukes, if he wishes to maintain this assertion, is committed to either the view that Baraka's shift is in accord with these criteria (and hence that "scientific socialism" is the most rational mode of social thought) or that Baraka's shift represents a

degenerating paradigm shift. The first view it seems is not in accord with Lukes' own beliefs[30] yet the second would, at the very least, be difficult to sustain or neutrally justify. It can be concluded that Lukes' assertion can only be maintained in a weakened sense. That is, we can begin to explain cogntivie change by means of some very general universal criteria of rationality the existence of which the relativist need not deny. However, there is no reason to believe that such change, especially in paradigms of social knowledge, can be fully explicable in terms of these criteria and hence that particular instances of cognitive change can be uniquely ordered or evaluated without irreducible conflict.

Finally, there are three further challenges to relativism which identify what are taken to be counter-intuitive results of relativism and which are therefore considered to present problems for the position. First, there is the venerable practice of adducing any of a number of uncontested facts and then reasoning that if the relativist asserts that these facts are true for some theories and false for others, the position is absurd; conversely, the relativist is said to contradict his own position if he concedes that such facts are true for every and all knowers. This procedure has been fashionable at least since it was enunciated by Lovejoy (1940) and has recently been repeated by Jarvie (1978). Both of these writers call attention to certain facts from military history and argue that it is odd to the point of incoherence to assert that knowledge of such facts is relative to one's social position or knowledge community. Hence it follows that relativism is false.

This challenge to relativism falls wide of its mark. In the discussion above concerning the underdetermination of theory by

observation, it was noted that there could be and is a wide area of intersection of observation terms or facts shared by competing knowledge communities. Such facts, however are not decisive with regard to theories which attempt to explain them. In short, the level of knowledge at which knowledge claims are relative in the strong sense presently under consideration is that of explanation or, more generally, theory rather than fact. Thus to continue within the military sphere, Marxist and rightist historians will agree on nearly all of the salient facts concerning World War II but will offer irreducibly opposed theoretical explanations of its causes, conduct and consequences. As noted above, shared or brute facts are necessary to establish a basis for intra-cultural relativism to be possible but they provide only very limited means for its mitigation.

Another quick refutation of relativism which has been often been offered is to simply assert that a relativist sociology of knowledge is based on a logical fallacy and is consequently incorrect. The logical fallacy adduced is that of the argument ad hominum. It has been said (Jarvie, 1976: Widsom, 1973) that relativists have failed to understand that it is incorrect to reason from the social status or perspective of a knower to the truth value of his assertions. Thus Jarvie (1976:526, 527) insists that "there is no inference from what a man is to what he says. This is ad hominum." This position allows for a weak form of the sociology of knowledge in which sociologists could study why certain individuals or knowledge communities assert certain beliefs but it will not sanction the relativistic study of the actual epistemic functioning of various knowledge communities.

Again, this challenge against relativism fails. It fails

because it confuses an epistemic norm or technique with the meta-epistemological or sociological study of the operation of such norms in particular social contexts. Within the community of sociologists studying knowledge communities from the relativist standpoint, the prohibition of ad hominum reasoning will be in force, at least ritualistically, but one can easily imagine knowledge communities which do not hold to this norm (the Catholic church is a particularly interesting example). However the norm is vacuous with regard to the content of sociological knowledge claims. That is, a mature sociology of knowledge might make it possible to make inferences from an individual's social position to those propositions he will justifiably assert as true. Yet this is by no means a violation of the ad hominum norm for both the subject's knowledge claim and the sociologist's knowledge claim, which has as its content the claim of the subject, will be appraised without reference to the social position of those who have asserted these claims. Thus only the content of the sociologist's knowledge claim will (superficially) appear to violate the ad hominum norm; the claim itself and its justification will be judged in the sociologist's community in accordance with this norm. Failure to make this distinction results in the assertion that the relativist sociology of knowledge is based on an (informal) logical fallacy.

A third refutation of relativism which is developed by drawing on supposedly counter-intuitive results of the position calls attention to the issue of inter-knowledge community criticism. It has often been taken as a consequence of the relativist thesis that such criticism is impossible or in some other way illegitimate. This charge is Gellner's (1974) primary quarrel with relativism. He terms the relativist theory

of knowledge a "re-endorsement theory" which denies the existence of any contextless cognitive criteria and hence the possibility of any cognitive criticism either within specific contexts and especially between contexts. Taylor (1963:582), speaking in an analogous way of ethical relativism, asserts "that an ethical relativist may be defined as one who denies that the language of 'ideal morality' has any legitimate or justifiable use." He goes on to say that morality for the ethical relativist (and analogously, knowledge for the cognitive relativist) is reduced to what is accepted as such by specific moral and knowledge communities.

This last point is, in general, correct but it does not follow from this that there is not or cannot be an ideal ethical or epistemic language. To suppose that it does follow is to confuse the two sorts of relativism which Mannheim originally distinguished and which can be termed destructive and descriptive relativism. A destructive relativist is one who wields the relativist thesis reductively against epistemic or moral opponents in order to show that their theories and beliefs are nothing but expressions of interests and ideology. The destructive relativist typically smuggles in, for his own knowledge and morality, transcendent moral and epistemic criteria which he denies the opponent. The destructive relativist does, overtly at least, wish to deny that there is any sense to the idea of an ideal moral or epistemic language.

The descriptive form of relativism which is the form developed here, applies relativism consistently and hence reflexively. There is nothing in this form of relativism which denies that individuals within knowledge communities have access to an ideal epistemic language. In other words, locutions such as 'is p really true?' or 'have we been

incorrect in believing p?' or 'does p correspond to reality' and so forth are perfectly intelligible in both intra- and inter- knowledge community discourse. What the relativist does want to do, however, is to revise the understanding of such ideal discourse which is normally understood as describing the results of the application of neutral and universally valid epistemic criteria. On the relativist account, the use of an ideal epistemic language is persuasive rather than descriptive and its application is to be understood and investigated relative to the knowledge community within which it occurs. The relativist does not deny the obvious existence and use of such language but certainly the question of whether it should be employed by those external to a particular community is an ethical one which is left undecided by the relativist thesis. The terms of ideal ethical and epistemic languages are, in short, terms of appraisal and not description. Thus Gellner is correct in his understanding of relativism as a "descriptive" theory of knowledge but mistaken, because of inattention to the ethical rather than epistemic questions involved, in asserting that it is necessarily a "re-endorsement" theory of knowledge.

Acknowledging the existence of ideal epistemic discourse also allows the relativist to account for dynamism and change in the content of knowledge. One opponent of relativism however has charged that relativism entails "that nothing is conceivable beyond what is taken as knowledge among particular groups" (Trigg, 1978:290). But this is clearly incorrect. For it is an entirely plausible endeavor for the relativist to observe how the conventions and standards operative within particular knowledge communities either promote or inhibit the reassessment, the advance and thus change in the content of cognitive claims

regarded by particular groups as knowledge. The notion of an ideal language draws attention to such conventions.

It can be concluded that the set of standard challenges to and refutations of relativism have very little force against the doctrine although they certainly force the relativist to clarify his thinking about the nature of the relativist thesis. This clarification has taken the form of pointing to the philosophical parameters which support relativism. Still, any form of relativism will be fraught with difficulties and unresolved problems with regard to the severe revision of epistemic concepts that relativism demands. However, the relativist need not feel daunted by this state of affairs simply because relativism is not self-defeating, it is self-affirming.

Absolutisms of all sorts have traditionally and continue to incur great embarrassment in the face of the diversity of philosophical and scientific systems and truth claims. If truth can only be an absolute relation between propositions and reality and if truth is so clearly grasped by us, why, askes the absolutist, is there such a wealth of competing and contradictory systems of thought? In short, the problem of epistemic diversity must continually challenge the absolutist.

For the relativist however, epistemic diversity constitutes confirming evidence for the doctrine. More significantly, the status of the relativist thesis itself is explained by the doctrine. It has no lack of challengers who sincerely contend that the doctrine is intellectually absurd and morally pernicious. Yet surely the relativist will extend the relativist thesis to include philosophical knowledge and in this way will show that this sort of diversity and conflict is the unexceptionable outcome of the diversity of factors which condition

the construction of philosophical knowledge.[31]

Consider the methodological and evidential status of the relativist thesis. There remain great problems having to do with the nature of objectivity, truth and the growth of knowledge as well as unfulfilled empirical issues as to how the knowledge of competing communities is in fact true relative to those communities rather than simply false. But again, the content of the relativist position shows how these unresolved problems are unexceptionable. The relativist claims that theories, world views, and research programmes are, in part, dogmas in the sense that they are prior to and thus condition the content and import of evidence and solutions to the problems that those who collect themselves under the banner of these dogmas confront. These theories or research programmes are in a sense political entities which aim to promote, prolong and enhance their status and longevity. And this is accomplished by continually addressing new problems, problems that must be re-examined, and solutions that need to be strengthened. As Kuhn (1970a: 10) writes, one of the crucial features of any research programme is that it must "leave all sorts of problems for the practitioners to resolve."

The reflexive self-understanding provided by the relativist thesis explains its perpetual condition of only having started to solve the problems which it raises. The relativist thesis is a research and world view dogma itself. It must therefore promote its existence by acknowledging its own difficulties while at the same time claiming that these difficulties only require for their resolution an adequate treatment and explanation by proponents. Relativism therefore accounts for the interminable existence of philosophical opponents and its unresolved

conceptual and substantive problems. It accounts for these so that they cannot essentially jeopardize its claim to be a correct and methodologically fruitful account of knowledge. Relativism is in this way self-affirming.

Notes to Chapter VIII

1. Meiland (1977:571f) has relied on this terminology of two versus three term relations to explicate the notion of relative truth and its contrast with absolute truth.

2. This definition is adopted from one offered by Skorupski (1978:91). However, I believe this author has not properly stressed the notion that there is not, or at least may not be, a neutral decision procedure.

3. See, for example, Todd (1976:178): "The relativist can believe what he wants to, at least within certain limits, insist that what he believes is true for him, and reject the arguments of others as irrelevant." This expression of relativism as subjectivism is not as extreme as others due to the qualification but to place primary emphasis on the individual knower is to misconceive the relativist thesis.

4. It may be surprising to note that this is as far as Winch seems prepared to push relativism (1970:84). Also, in a recent paper (1976), Winch defends his version of conceptual relativism and, for the first time in print, explicitly states that he does and has argued for this sort of relativism. He does however continue to argue strongly against the more radical version of relativism which is here called inter-domain relativism.

5. See, for example, his essay "Truth, rationality, and the growth of scientific knowledge" (1960:233, 234) where he discusses how the truth and falsity content of a theory are related to the concept of versimilitude which presupposes convergence toward absolute knowledge.

6. Flew (1976) contends that this sort of carelessness is to be found in a volume edited by Young (1971). Although some of his criticisms

fall wide of their mark, he is correct to protest against the simplicity of Blum's assertion that "it is not an objectively discernable purely existing external world which accounts for sociology; it is the methods and procedures of sociology which create and sustain that world." (cited in Flew, 1976:12). Indeed, this naive kind of solipsism is an easy target for anti-relativists.

7. The skeptical impulse behind relativism has too rarely been explicitly acknowledged. Natanson (1963) is one of the few writers who has stressed this link. In an essay by Hesse (1975) the skeptical impulse behind relativism takes a curious turn in her assertion that we can never know whether we have absolute or only relative knowledge.

8. Durkheim might be understood to make the stronger claim that categorical frameworks simply are social reality: "Since the world expressed by the entire system of concepts is the one that society regards, society alone can furnish the most general notions with which it should be represented" (1915:441). However he seems to qualify this strong sociologico identity thesis by asserting that a more developed "logical organization differentiates itself from the social organization and becomes autonomous" (1915:445).

9. Rescher's distinction between mute ontological reality and cognized epistemological reality is clearly inapplicable for social reality for there is a sense in which a conceptual structure applicable to social reality simply is (rather than is of) that reality.

10. My discussion of realism and anti-realism relies heavily on Dummett (1973:464-470) and Scruton (1976).

11. This has also been affirmed by Williams (1975:227): "Scientific realism could be true, and if it is, relativism for scientific theories

must be false."

12. For a more sustained development of this point see Hesse (1972).

13. The implication of the underdetermination of theories for relativism is briefly explored by Skorupski (1978:90f). Lukes (1978) has also extended this issue to the realm of social theory. The account of the general idea of the underdetermination of theory by data is largely dependent on Hesse (1974: Chapter 1).

14. Sharpe (1974:58) has advanced the suggestion, based on moral considerations, that the goals which animate ideology may justify maintaining that ideology in the face of disconfirming evidence: "If a person soundly judges that a certain ideology enables him to be useful to his fellow men, it might be rational for him to suppress certain arguments which tell against that ideology."

15. This is a standard response against Kuhn, perhaps most influentially voiced by Scheffler (1967).

16. DeGre (1970) repeats most of the admonitions which enjoin sociologists to back away from matters which are the proper domain of the epistemologist. Assuming a naive form of the correspondence theory of truth he advises that it is not the function of the sociology of knowledge "to pass value judgements as to the intrinsic truth, worth, beauty, or comparative value or validity of the thought products with which it deals" (1970:662). DeGre therefore offers a form of the agnostic stance as a solution of the problem of truth. Child (1947) implies a careful and skeptical form of the evaluative sociology of knowledge by positing a level of "primal" or "biotic" categories with reference to which competing knowledge claims can, in principle, be adjudicated.

17. Johnson (1977:510, 512) has developed an interesting variant of the performative theory for fact language: "We must ask not what facts are, but what 'fact' language does ... 'fact' language ... has the primary linguistic force of expressing certification of the adequacy of evidence."

18. Lehrer (1974:16) states this connection by considering the social nature of epistemological justification: "If we consider justification in a social context, the justification of knowledge claims need proceed only as long as some claim to knowledge is disputed ... there is no reason to suppose that the argument need proceed beyond the point at which agreement is reached."

19. Dummett (1959:141), among others, has reasoned in this way. See White (1970:101) for further references.

20. Taylor (1960:82) very cautiously suggested some years ago that the sociology of knowledge "perhaps" necessitates "some basic modification of the concept of objectivity." I find this modification to be available in the thought of Wittgenstein. Thus the conception of objectivity offered here is taken largely from the development of the ideas of Wittgenstein in the work of Winch (1958:95-102) and Hamlyn (1970: Chapters 3 and 5).

21. Thus a relativist such as McHugh (1970) by failing to explicitly note the constraints found in human commonalities is left in an embarrassingly apologetic position when he comes to explain why knowledge communities are not far more disparate than they actually are. In the end (1970:353) he is forced to simply assert "people could take any procedure as adequate [i.e. could construct private 'realities'] and each of them could take some different procedure. But they do not."

22. The claim that relativism is self-defeating is so common that it is not necessary to cite particular instances of it. Suffice it to say that it was asserted by Grunwald in 1934 (reprinted, 1970) in opposition to Mannheim and it has recently been upheld by Trigg (1978:290).

23. Bierstedt (1971:3) specifically cites this issue in connection with Russell's work and calls it the "ultimate and unresolvable paradox" of the sociology of knowledge.

24. I have discussed this episode in logical theory in more detail and have provided primary references in Kozlowski (1979b).

25. Hookway (1978:29) has for certain technical reasons having to do with Tarski's criterion of adequacy for truth definitions denied that this procedure for making relativism explicit is admissible. I have elsewhere (Kozlowski, 1979a) shown that a more careful reading of Tarski will not substantiate his criticisms.

26. See Hollis (1970:214-220).

27. Nielsen (1974) has argued this claim in greater detail. See also Mullick (1975).

28. See, for example, Willer (1971:19): "Perception of order in empirical situations is based on the type of system of knowledge used, and it follows that experience will not contradict it."

29. My information of Baraka's paradigm shift is limited to a lengthy newspaper report (Sullivan, 1974:1, 28). Recently Sollars (1978) has considered Baraka's move to Marxism in more detail.

30. Lukes has written a polemical denunciation of Soviet Marxist ideology. The title of the article yields some clue as to the strategy of its content: "The facts close in on the faith" (1966). To an individual who is familiar with denunciations from the other side, i.e.

Marxist denunciations of American capitalist ideology, it is striking to realize that the substantive claims and charges made in Lukes' piece could be used almost in their entirety by the Marxist by merely changing names, dates and locations e.g. 'Soviet imperialism in Africa' to 'American imperialism in Vietnam.'

31. Rescher (1978) has recently defended a relativistic account of philosophical knowledge. There are, he writes, "equally eligible alternative evaluative orientations which underwrite different and mutually incompatible resolutions of philosophical issues" (1978:229). The "ultimate basis" of this kind of pluralistic disagreement "is extratheoretical because it is pretheoretical" (1978:22n).

CHAPTER IX

PROSPECTS FOR A RELATIVIST SOCIOLOGY OF KNOWLEDGE

In this final chapter some conceptual and methodological issues are discussed which arise from the philosophical remarks offered in the preceeding chapter. This discussion is not intended, excepted in a rather abstract and general way, to be a detailed methodological programme or conceptual framework for research in the sociology of knowledge.[1] Rather, the primary task is to arrive at some understanding of the relation between the philosophical doctrine of relativism and a programme of research in the sociology of knowledge.

A primary intention of this work has been the development of a plausible conception of epistemological relativism. The primary philosophical barrier which must be overcome in this endeavor is reconciling relativism with common epistemological intuitions and beliefs. Towards this end, it was suggested in Chapter VIII that there are numerous constraints which should be placed on an account of relativism so as to satisfy some of these intuitions. More specifically, it was shown that the relativist can concede that there are pervasive and anthropologically universal elements in human cognition. It follows from this that the relativist can retain some element of the classical notion of objectivity and admit that within single methodological domains there exists a common body of facts. It was also asserted that the relativist can account for the change and growth of knowledge by calling attention to conventions embodied in ideal epistemic language. This strategy would need to be filled out in far more detail in order to develop a fully plausible account of relativism. But Chapter VIII

provides at least a hint of what such an account would yield, namely, a mitigated or moderate form of the philosophical doctrine which is moderate precisely because it has countered the charges of anti-relativists who often react to very radical or caricatured versions of the doctrine.[2]

A similar set of difficulties is encountered when attempting to implement relativism as a research programme. Here again, common conceptions of the sort of research which is permissible within a relativist framework clash with intuitions about the nature of social reality and felt conceptions of how sociology and sociologists are related to that reality. Sociological opponents of relativism charge that relativism can only issue in a highly passivist and conservative conception of sociology which embodies mistaken beliefs about the nature of social reality and an inadequate conception of the role which the sociologist should have in the constitution and changing of social conditions. To take the most common substantive complaint, sociological relativism is often found lacking because it is alleged to have noplace for the ethically rich notion of false consciousness. There are grounds for charging that relativism does have these methodological consequences. However, the intention of the present chapter is to suggest that the doctrine need not have these consequences. More specifically, the intention is to demonstrate that relativism can issue in a more adequate or fruitful research programme than some of the evaluative programmes discussed previously. Relativism can accomplish this without sacrificing a place for some of the ethical intuitions concerning the nature of sociological practice which evaluative stances have typically stressed.

This strategy can also be stated by reference to a second intention of this work, To this point, references to Mannheim have been nearly entirely critical. However, the purpose of the critique of Mannheim has been, in effect, to save him from his solution to relativism. This solution has resulted in a good deal of justified criticism yet too often critics have not given sufficient attention to his substantive contributions which are of a much higher quality than his philosophical ruminations concerning relativism. However, the critique offered here allows for this positive content to remain. After stripping away the contradictory Hegelian basis of the solution which is largely extraneous to the historicist substance of his sociology of knowledge, we are left with a form of relativism. And showing that relativism is a coherent and plausible doctrine allows one to accept much of Mannheim's substantive analysis.

This suggests that a relativist sociology of knowledge has a good deal to learn from Mannheim. However, it would be mistaken to suggest that Mannheim's solution to relativism was merely an intellectual exercise. For, as Kettler (1967, 1975) has established, Mannheim was acutely motivated by the political and moral factors associated with very troubled social conditions. It follows that any research programme which wants to claim Mannheim as positive intellectual predecessor must retain a place for self-understanding and practice which arises from and is relevant to contemporary political and social conditions.

A good deal has already been said concerning what sorts of empirical problems and issues a relativist sociology of knowledge contains. In general terms, it has been suggested that the sociology

of knowledge should study the constitution, maintenance and change of systems of knowledge as they arise from an encompassing social context. Some of the more specific issues that have been suggested are the study of how knowledge groups react to anomalies, how 'paradigm shifts' occur, how and why meaning variance obtains and is either obscured or heightened among knowledge communities. It has also been suggested that the most characteristic feature of the relativist programme is that the epistemic standards of the researcher's community are isolated from the context of discovery. This serves to sensitize investigators to the possibility that the standards and the conceptual framework of the group under study may well be different than those of the investigator's community. It is therefore descriptions and hypotheses concerning these aspects of the group under study which are subject to validation according to the standards of the sociological community. This distinction between the contexts of discovery and justification has been much maligned for it is associated with the philosophy of logical positivism. However none of the positivist's claims concerning the insulation of any particular context of justification from psychological and sociological study need be accepted here.[3] The distinction is made in order to emphasize that a relativist sociology of knowledge will not typically be concerned to offer epistemic evaluations concerning the knowledge claims of the communities under study.

It has already been noted how difficulties can arise from any attempt to specify, prior to empirical research grounded in the content of a specific subject matter, a very detailed set of expectations concerning the conceptual and theoretical structure of the discipline. It will be enough therefore to specify some of the

empirical problems suggested by the philosophical positions which underwrite relativism. This strategy shall be in force for most of the remainder of the chapter. It is implemented, however, with attention given to some of the difficulties and complexities which are likely to be encountered in a sociological implementation of relativism.

First some attention must be given to the concept of "knowledge community". The term has been employed throughout the work without any explication but this is justified for the philosophical purposes which it has served since the notion has a fair degree of intuitive clarity. However, this clarity quickly slips away in the face of what would be a primary research task, namely, the identification and demarcation of knowledge communities.

This task could be achieved in two ways. The first, and perhaps more straightforward, would be the identification of knowledge communities by reference to the groups of persons who constitute them. The second would be by reference to the systems of knowledge which constitute them. This distinction has affinities to Masterman's (1970) conceptual analysis of the notion of paradigm. She also distinguishes paradigms as communities of scientists as opposed to paradigms as cognitive entities. Again, how these dimensions are utilized in actual research should not be prescribed prior to research. However there are two issues apart from the exigencies of any particular research project which the concept does raise.

First, the concept of knowledge community lends a significant degree of unity to the discipline. That is to say, it allows for any discernable group of individuals to be treated as a knowledged community. Evaluatively motivated programmes have often denied themselves this

unity by allegiance to a complex of prior normative assumptions regarding what knowledge must be. Thus there has been much superfluous debate over whether the sociology of knowledge is really a sociology of intellectuals or whether studying political knowledge claims is really the study of ideological distortion. By adopting the concept of knowledge community as fundamental or primitive, attention is drawn to the relativist commitment to a naturalistic approach to knowledge. The approach is naturalistic in the sense that it seeks to understand how and for what purposes groups of individuals construct knowledge and the ways which their existence as a group is reflected in that knowledge. This naturalistic strategy, among other advantages, allows for a comparative study of the standards and content of knowledge and knowledge communities the terms of which are not given in advance by the evaluative categories of the investigator. Indeed, it was the need for this sort of comparative study that originally led Mannheim to call for conceptual unity in the study of cognitive products:

> Our first task, then, is to evolve concepts applicable (like a co-ordinate system) to every sphere of cultural activity alike — concepts making it possible to ask meaningful questions regarding art as well as literature, philosophy as well as political ideology, and so on (1952a:74).

The claim made here is that the concept of a knowledge community fulfils Mannheim's requirement. It suggests that the sociology of knowledge is not the highly circumscribed sub-discipline which it is often thought to be. In short, any community can be studied as a knowledge community.

The second issue connected with the concept of knowledge community is that its use would necessarily be somewhat arbitrary or involve a good deal of idealization. This problem is entailed by the

conceptual understanding of relativism developed earlier. This understanding included the recognition of humanly universal elements of cognition and hence some wide scale sharing of epistemic standards. By admitting this, it follows that there is a sense in which all humans and especially groups of humans united by a single culture constitute a single knowledge community. And this is the case in terms of both dimensions of the concept namely, human individuals and systems of knowledge. However, to speak metaphorically, if there is a common web of beliefs, it still remains that discrete groups either develop and value certain areas of that web to the exclusion of others or develop discrete systems of beliefs as accretions to that common web.

It is therefore largely a matter of research interests which determine the boundaries which sociologists will attempt to demarcate when they locate knowledge communities for study. For example, the phenomenological approach in the sociology of knowledge might be understood to have decided to demarcate a single knowledge community via pervasive elements of human cognition and epistemic significance.[4] Their "life-world" therefore is the encompassing web of beliefs mentioned above. In contrast, a relativist sociology of knowledge can be understood as wishing to locate far more isolated or discrete knowledge communities by reference to systems of theoretical knowledge or elements of political or professional ideologies. The research motivations associated with relativism seek to emphasize the particular or distinguishing elements of the epistemic and conceptual standards which characterize these discrete knowledge communities. This set of motivations should not obscure to the relativist the recognition that such discrete communities also have links to a more pervasive or even

universal knowledge community. It is this recognition which forces the relativist to concede that a demarcation of knowledge communities which heightens the potential for relativistic and conflictual analysis, also involves a large element of idealization or even arbitrary imposition of boundaries.

Of course the degree of epistemic fragmentation in the subject matter will set tolerance levels for a warranted degree of idealization. However, it is important for the sociological relativist to recognize that there is this element of idealization and that it follows from this that the knowledge communities so identified are not seamless. That is, they are not impervious to criticism by reference to the epistemic standards and knowledge given in the more pervasive knowledge communities of which they are a part. Moreover, the relativist must recognize that such criticism can legitimately proceed either internally by members of a particular community or externally by individuals who have some interest in the cognitive revision of that community.

Introducing the element of criticism is somewhat premature. That is, it can only be seen in perspective after the descriptive aspect of the relativist programme is discussed. However, these last two sentences have introduced the two key terms necessary for understanding the procedures and results of a relativist sociology of knowledge. They are "descriptive" and "revisionary" analysis. These notions are taken from Strawson (1959) who uses them to distinguish metaphysical methods of analysis. Descriptive analysis, according to Strawson, "is content to describe the actual structure of our thought about the world" while revisionary analysis "is concerned to produce

a better structure" (1959:9). Suitably broadened and explicated this distinction can yield important insights as to the nature of a relativistic sociology of knowledge.

To explicate the nature of descriptive analysis would be to produce and implement a full scale account of methodology. This account raises large and important questions. However, their detailed analysis is clearly beyond the scope of the present work. Suffice it to say that the general strategy of descriptive analysis would be to seek out the knowledge claims of the community under study and then make inferences from these claims back to the conceptual and epistemic standards which support them.[5] A simple example of this process has been offered in my speculation concerning an aspect of the conceptual structure of the upper class Ecuadorians in Chapter VI. That example also illustrates some further salient aspects of descriptive analysis. Namely, that the analyst must proffer a certain degree of benevolence in making assumptions about the thinking of the community under study. It was implicitly assumed that the Ecuadorians do not engage in blatant forms of self-deception or self-contradiction and that their thought exhibits a high degree of internal coherence and validity. Indeed, this 'principle of benevolence' is very revealing of an element of conservatism which distinguishes the relativist sociology of knowledge from the more obstreperous 'debunking spirit' associated with evaluative programmes.

In essence, descriptive analysis would be concerned to identify how members of knowledge communities actually do think and construct and extend their knowledge. However, it would be of great importance for a relativist research programme to identify and describe how certain

knowledge communities or sections of knowledge communities abuse recognized and standard reasoning processes (that is, recognized and standard for that community) so as to either come to hold false beliefs themselves or in order to pass false beliefs on to those over whom they have epistemic authority. Introducing a provision for analysis of abuse of recognized standards of reasoning and hence false beliefs is a way of reconciling relativism with the undeniable observation that persons often do have false beliefs or deceive others into accepting them. In contrast, it has often been thought that relativism precludes this sort of research interest. However, relativism certainly contains no conceptual impediments to such interests although it enjoins the analyst to be quite cautious as to their identification. This point will be elaborated below.

Beyond these general methodological directives, not much more of a descriptive methodology can be discussed. It might be suggested that situations where learning or debate takes place as well as situations where knowledge claims are validated, extended or rejected will be especially important in making the sort of inferences desired by descriptive analysis. In addition, the purposes of the practice and existence of knowledge with reference to a particular knowledge community and its social context will also be of primary interest.

The idea of a descriptive sociology of knowledge harbours a potential misunderstanding. Presumedly descriptive analysis would not issue in a mere description of the epistemic structure and functioning of a knowledge community as it would appear in the description of an ideally situated informant. In other words, a descriptive programme would not be concerned to merely reproduce the account which a knowledge

community offers of itself. Rather, there would be a good deal of redescription in the content of mature relativistic accounts of knowledge communities. This redescription would proceed in terms of both a relativist epistemology and the substantive findings of the sociology of knowledge. Consider a community which claims to produce knowledge of absolute truths which bear no relation at all to their social structure and interests. In this case, redescription might proceed by showing the ways in which their supposedly absolute truths were actually relative and also in showing how the content of those claims did, in fact, reflect and promote their particular social interests. Thus the primary force of calling a relativistic sociology of knowledge a descriptive programme is that it seeks to elucidate in sociological terms the standards, concepts and self-understanding of the subject community which are actually in use in that community. Acknowledging that this might well involve redescription in the sense explained does not detract from the relativistic presuppositions of descriptive analysis.

The notion of redescription provides convenient access to a properly relativistic appraisal of the evaluative sociology of knowledge. Within the framework developed here, evaluative programmes can be understood via redescription as attempts at revisionary analysis. Proponents of evaluative programmes claim to have access to universal or absolute standards of validity and from this standpoint claim to show that the knowledge of the communities under study is false or otherwise limited. However, if such an evaluative sociological community were the object of a sociological analysis by a relativist community, their analytic efforts would be redescribed as revisionary in an interventionist

way. More specifically, they would be shown to be engaged in a promotion of their standards and content of thought to the community under study. In a sense, therefore, they can be understood to be making a largely moral claim: 'Our way of reasoning and our beliefs are better than your's; you should adopt them'.

Why is this kind of redescription of the evaluative programme important? First, it is a way of being consistent in terms of the reflexive self-understanding achieved in the relativist programme. Thus, the relativist cannot consistently claim that the various forms of the evaluative programme are false or incoherent in any straightforward sense. That they could be so adjudicated was a fiction adopted in Part Two for purposes of debate. However, a consistent implementation of the kind of self-understanding sketched at the end of Chapter VIII demands that this fiction be recognized as such. Still the terms and intentions of the evaluative programme are inadmissible in a relativist understanding of these kinds of programmes. Therefore, the redescription provided for by the notion of revisionary analysis yields a consistent relativist understanding of the evaluative sociology of knowledge.

Redescription of the evaluative programme in terms of their primary interest in revisionary analysis is important for a second reason. It clarifies the status of revisionary analysis as a technique in a relativist sociology of knowledge. Relativism has often been thought to preclude efforts at what is here called revisionary analysis by virtue of its stress on the internal generation of epistemic functions.[6] However, the understanding of relativism developed above imposes no conceptual impediments to an inclusion of revisionary analysis within a relativist programme. Importantly, it is conceded that there

are pervasive aspects and standards of cognition and that there is an ideal epistemic language which can be implemented in either an intra- or inter-knowledge community context which is, in part, the vehicle by which these standards are implemented. It is denied, of course, that such standards are or could be decisive with regard to the adjudication of any system of knowledge. But they do contribute an important component in understanding the nature of inter-knowledge community discourse and criticism.

The relativist will still insist on one important constraint on revisionary analysis. Namely, that it must be preceeded by and thus remain importantly dependent on descriptive analysis. As a matter of methodological rigour and even ethical propriety, if sociologists wish to intervene and promote a new way of thinking or a new content of knowledge, then they should be clear as to what standards and content are actually in use in the target community. Using somewhat different terms, it is commonly thought that interpretive social science and critical social science which incorporates the idea of revolutionary practice are highly distinct enterprises (e.g. Ryan, 1970:162f). However, the argument which is suggested here is that revolutionary practice, or revisionary analysis, would require a foundation in careful interpretive or descriptive analysis. The relativist will still criticize the imposition of evaluative judgements on knowledge communities which have not been carefully studied. And it is this kind of imposition which is too characteristic of revisionary analysis in the sociology of knowledge.

The relativist will also contend that the decision to engage in revisionary analysis and intervention will be one conditioned by largely

moral considerations. This follows from denying that such analysis has recourse to absolute standards of knowledge and validity and hence from the recognition that only the structure of an internally generated moral and epistemic commitment to the standards that are held by the evaluator can justify revisionary analysis.[7]

This contention that the implementation of revisionary practice in the sociology of knowledge relies on a framework of moral commitment rather than epistemic certitude suggests that the relativist must clarify the ethical content of his own programme. A committed relativist programme would be far less prone to sanction revisionary analysis than the evaluative programmes discussed previously. This has, of course, led to the common charge that relativism contains highly conservative political and ethical foundations.[8] While there is some basis for this assertion, perhaps a more plausible connection could be made between relativism and the political theory of liberal pluralism. This position claims, in general, that the greatest good arises from the clash and eventual resultant progress of competing political groups working within a general framework of common values. Although this position would need a great deal more support, it can be suggested that relativism is the epistemology of political pluralism. For this reason, the relativist sociology of knowledge takes its place alongside bourgeois political science as the analyst of epistemic pluralism and conflict.

These remarks can be tentatively taken as showing that a sociology of knowledge based on a relativist epistemology may still, without loss of consistency, engage in forms of interventionist sociological practice. I have shown that the justification for such practice is to be found in moral considerations rather than claims of epistemic

absoluteness. The mitigation of epistemic relativity by reliance on the relativity of moral values may not be entirely reassuring. However, the claim here is not that revisionary analysis is only justifiable through moral considerations. Rather, the claim is that it always has at least some basis in such considerations. This implies that there may be phenomena that characterize knowledge communities or parts of knowledge communities that can justify interventionist practice with a high degree of certitude. Such a phenomenon may be that of false consciousness.

It has often been argued that a relativist sociology of knowledge excludes the concept of false consciousness from its conceptual apparatus (e.g. Meja, 1975:62). However, once again, given the form of relativism previously adopted, there are no conceptual barriers to retaining some sense for this notion although that sense may be sufficiently distinct from the concept's traditional sense so as to make it mis-leading to retain the term.

One application of the concept would be in situations where one segment of a knowledge community holds a significant number and degree of false beliefs. These beliefs would of course have to be false relative to the epistemic standards which are held in common by those who hold the beliefs and those who have developed them. These situations would most likely arise in stratified knowledge communities in which there is a political and hence epistemic elite who, for purposes of political expediency, have systematically perverted recognized standards of knowledge and validation procedures in order to develop and inculcate a body of false beliefs.

A limiting case of such a community might be the one depicted

by Orwell in 1984. There it was precisely because there existed a body of epistemic standards that the elite was required to go to such great lengths to develop a large system of false beliefs. An actual case of this sort of false consciousness would be the knowledge community constituted by American society during the Vietnam era.

A more difficult form of the concept, and one which is perhaps closer to its traditional content, could be applied to those situations where there was a significant degree of collective forms of self-deception. The concept of self-deception itself is a difficult one to apply. But it does possess a common core of meaning which points to aspects of inconsistency or contradiction either among pairs of beliefs or within aspects of entire systems of knowledge or arising from membership in a plurality of contradictory knowledge communities. The 1984 society would constitute a limiting case of this sort of false consciousness. The knowledge communities constituted by women also have often been characterized as holding inconsistent if not contradictory beliefs concerning concepts of personal development and social worth. The last condition mentioned above is intended to cover perhaps the empirically more likely cases such as the Flat Earth Society. If it could be shown that this knowledge community and those like it participate in significant ways in our contemporary scientific knowledge community, then application of the concept of false consciousness to their members may well be warranted.

This is of course a very general approach to the problem but it is to be hoped that it at least points to some of the complexities involved in implementing a relativist epistemology as a research programme. In summary, there is nothing contained in that epistemology

which precludes that persons abuse recognized standards of reasoning and evidence, or that persons hold a large number of false beliefs, or that there are systematic aspects of inconsistency in systems of beliefs. What a relativist epistemology does require is that careful internal analysis of knowledge communities be accomplished before judgements of false consciousness are proffered. The relativist might therefore expect to find this phenomenon far more rarely than is the case in evaluative versions of the discipline. However, once it is identified, a relativist epistemology does not hinder interventionist practice by sociologists who either consider themselves as part of the community under study or those who have primary allegiance to an external community.

To this point, it has been suggested that a relativist sociology of knowledge encounters no conceptual barriers in attempting to account for and to engage in forms of sociological practice which are interventionist in character. This has been a partial fulfillment of the intention, stated at the beginning of the chapter, to account for in relativist terms, certain beliefs concerning the moral character of the sociological enterprise and certain common sense beliefs about the standards and empirical nature of beliefs.

A relativist sociology of knowledge does not stand in blatant opposition to these beliefs but rather adopts a cautious or conservative attitude toward them. However, the relativist does still wish to maintain that a relativist epistemology is conducive to the construction of a stronger analytical framework which could support more interesting research efforts. This claim can be supported by suggesting that relativism is compatible, in a way that evaluative approaches are not, with the analogical extension of traditional sociological concepts

to the study of knowledge and knowledge communities.

An example of such an extension can be provided by considering the terms under which a conflict perspective might be implemented in the discipline. In his relativist stance, Mannheim originally established the importance of understanding how "competition" which has roots in the more general phenomenon of societal conflict is of fundamental importance in understanding how socio-political knowledge is constituted. He was concerned to show how "even the categorical apparatus of thinking has become socially and politically differentiated as the result of competition at the stage of concentration" (1971c:250, 251). A relativist sociology of knowledge would be concerned to understand how political conflict is reflected in both scientific and ideological knowledge and how political positions are partially constitutive of that knowledge. Even within realms of knowledge not directly oriented to political concerns, the metaphors of conflict and political utility could be very powerful in understanding how knowledge communities promote and reproduce themselves.

It is beyond the scope of the present work to suggest how such concepts might be implemented in more detail. It is significant however, that such analogical extension is not as compatible within certain evaluative programmes.[9] One reason for this is that they cannot reflexively apply political metaphors to their own knowledge. Since they are committed to certain normative epistemological features which do not sanction the constitutitive role of social existence in knowledge, concepts and metaphors which call attention to this phenomenon are inadmissible in a reflexive understanding of the evaluative programme. This is another face to the problems which self-exemption from

relativism or social constitution of knowledge poses, but it is one which has methodological consequences. These consequences are that if political knowledge is viewed in a conflict perspective, the terms of the analysis are given in advance by the evaluative categories of the accepted epistemology. Those realms in which disagreements and conflicts in beliefs are easily recognizable are accounted for by assuming that the basis of such conflict must be largely 'non-cognitive' in character. Conflicting knowledge communities are therefore those which typically allow such 'non-cognitive' factors to 'distort' their beliefs. Evaluative programmes are therefore prone to the belief that, to the extent that such factors can be insulated from the construction of beliefs, those beliefs will be true. In contrast, the relativist can again call upon Mannheimian insights to contend that the link between social existence and social consciousness is too close to warrant the viability of these expectations which are taken over from traditional epistemologies. Given this basis, the relativist could show how irreducible epistemic conflict ensues from irreducible socio-political conflict. The relativist is therefore in a far better position to account for epistemic conflict.

In conclusion, the aim of this chapter has been to suggest that a relativist sociology of knowledge can incorporate at least some of the content of the classical impulse which has traditionally motivated the discipline. This aim of reconciliation also characterizes the account of relativism offered in Chapter VIII. Together, these two chapters have attempted to offer a relativistic perspective which is consistent with the existence of epistemological conflict and consensus and therefore of intellectual fragmentation and dialogue.

The doctrine of relativism is often rejected because it has been simplistically or inadequately defended. It is to be hoped that the account of relativism offered above can escape rejection on the basis of this kind of failure. At a deeper level however, relativism is often rejected because it challenges felt conceptions of the nature and of the duties of intellectual discourse. This rejection is based not only on perceived conceptual or empirical inadequacies in a statement of relativism but also on the intolerable intellectual and moral consequences which the doctrine is alleged to entail. It is argued that, if relativism is a correct view of knowledge and if social and political conflict are reflected in irreconcilable epistemological conflict, then intellectuals are restricted to merely document and sociologically explicate the world view and socially motivated basis of such conflict.

This result is taken to be intolerable. It countenances an evasion of the intellectual duty of mutual dialogue among persons who are committed to the truth of their knowledge claims and who aim to extend or modify those claims by testing them against the conflicting views of others. A relativist sociology of knowledge is said to reject the possibility of rational criticism and dialogue among beliefs because it claims that there is, at best, only an illusory basis for such intellectual activities.

It was asserted above, however, that the statement of relativism offered in Chapter VIII could account for intellectual dialogue. The suggestion was that there are a set of trans-cultural and trans-world view human commonalities which, to an extent to be disclosed by empirical investigation, allow for mutual understanding and comparison

of beliefs. It is these commonalities which support the socially negotiated and maintained standards which make debate and communication possible when beliefs and theories clash. Negotiated or mundanely available elements of this sort generally include shared rules and standards of intellectual debate such as consistency, coherence and empirical plausibility as well as elements to be found in shared or overlapping world views. On this basis, theses can be offered, debate and criticism can ensue, and, finally, errors can be pointed out and admitted to.

The relativist sociology of knowledge can in this way accommodate this normative function of intellectual discourse. However it can account for, in a way which absolutist epistemologies cannot, the undeniable fragility of such discourse. Debates involving theories or world views which are relative to highly disparate social foundations are often severely threatened by disruption. This is an occurrence to which a relativist sociology of knowledge is acutely sensitive but which either embarrasses abolutist sociologies of knowledge or, more often, induces their proponents to apply their strategic concept of false consciousness.

This fragility certainly entails no moral or epistemological imperative in relativism which prohibits this discursive engagement of those who support radically opposed knowledge claims. It is a disturbing fact, however, that such engagement will often result in debate which becomes stalemated and arouses intense emotions. Here, errors which are obvious to some will not be to others and concepts which have clear application for some will be denied application by others. At such times, it may well be profitable to cease evaluative analysis of the

conflicting knowledge claims and either continue with the aid of the sociology of knowledge or lapse into silence.

Wegsehen sei meine einzige Verneinung!

Nietzsche

Die frohliche Wissenschaft (276)

Notes to Chapter IX

1. Although attempts to develop, prior to the practice of research, detailed conceptual frameworks and theoretical expectations are not without merit, significant and integrative results of this sort can only emerge in cyclical fashion from sustained research efforts. Since the conception of this work has not been directed to a cycle of theory and research, I feel justified in being highly programmatic in these remarks in the text. It is interesting to note however, that this kind of integration of theory, research, and a detailed methodological programme is crystalizing round a Kuhnian sociology of knowledge. Immershine (1977) has, against the background of his own and others research, attempted to develop a quite detailed methodological strategy in terms of what he calls "ethnoparadigm analysis". But one may question whether his very close adherence to Kuhnian categories and theoretical expectations results in too rigid a methodology. This point would have to be argued in more detail than can be offered here but one can immediately question his hypothesis that anomalies can only be accounted for as "the result of rule violations under the current paradigm" or that a paradigm community has recourse to no "prescribed or prescribable criteria" beyond "empirical success or failure" when they are considering a shift to a new paradigm (1977:30, 31). The point that could be argued is whether Immershein is developing a set of methodological guidelines as he claims to do or a set of ad hoc theoretical hypotheses by reasoning too closely in terms of the framework which Kuhn has offered for understanding natural science. In any case, a Kuhnian inspired sociology of knowledge clearly has close

affinities to the view of the discipline offered here. However, I have tried to respond to the broader philosophical movement of which Kuhn is a part.

2. It may well be that a relativist sociology of knowledge could be viable on even a far weaker form of philosophical relativism than that offered in Chapter VIII. For example, Doppelt (1978) has reconstructed Kuhn's relativism in a highly attenuated manner. On his reading Kuhn's results support only "a short-run relativism" concerning scientific knowledge and rationality. Paradigm shifts are said to involve only a relativism with regard to research interests and problems. In short, Doppelt's relativism does not extend to intrinsically epistemological or ontological matters.

3. This was Hans Reichenbach's precise claim. He was also the originator of the distinction (1938:7f).

4. Given the consensus that characterizes the knowledge community demarcated by the phenomenological approach, Roland (1972:76) seems clearly incorrect in maintaining that "this type of sociology of knowledge is far more 'threatening' to the social order than the classical sociology of knowledge which dealt with ideologies ... and weltanschauung." Indeed, it is far from clear why explaining how people learn to follow train schedules or find medical help to (perhaps unfairly) single out two of Berger and Luckman's more mundane interests is threatening to social order or any of the powerful groups within it. On the other hand, showing that the knowledge of those groups is limited because it is relative to their particular interests is far more threatening to the claims that such groups typically make for their knowledge. Schmidt (1978:97f) is therefore correct in claiming

that the phenomenological programme has lost all aspects of the "emancipatory intentions" of the classical sociology of knowledge.

5. I have adopted this manner of stating the methodological strategy of descriptive analysis from Harman (1973) who reasons that the philosophical study of inductive inference can best proceed by understanding how people do in fact arrive at justified inferential knowledge claims.

6. Thus Jarvie (1970:232) charges that under the terms of Winchian relativism "cross-cultural value judgements will always be misjudgements — and therefore should be avoided — because there is no language game in which cross-cultural value-judgements could be legitimate moves."

7. Berger and Pullberg in their important paper "Reification and the sociological critique of consciousness" (1965) seem to go some way toward this claim. They distinguish their use of the evaluative categories of reification and false consciousness from their standard Marxist usage. On this basis they say that "just because of its social functionality, reification is a cross-cultural and historically recurrent phenomenon" (1965:208). They therefore suggest that some reification and hence aspects of false consciousness "constitutes the de facto reality of most socio-historical situations." Given the pervasiveness of the phenomenon and its likely existence in the potentially evaluative community, it can be suggested (although these authors do not explicitly do so) that the decision to intervene against the false consciousness of another community involves an aspect of moral commitment on the part of the evaluators and not the claim that the evaluator's themselves have an absolutely de-reified or true consciousness.

8. Two authors have thus shown affinities between Wittgensteinian relativism and the political theory of Burke (Walsh, 1963:131 and Pitkin, 1972:8). However reticence to intervene can support what is now taken to be a liberal attitude towards alien and primitive society. Winch has commented on the proselytizing impulse of certain religious groups in such societies: "... this is a way of thinking which I wouldn't support at all ... I am not generally in favour of missionary activities" (cited in Gellner, 1973:77n).

9. I am trying here to develop some suggestions made along these lines by Martins (1972:56) in a slighltly different context. He seems sympathetic to some form of relativism and contends from this perspective that "there seems no reason to take the view that conflict must necessarily stem from ignorance or error and be epistemically contingent or redundant."

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